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REVIEWED INSIDE!
ISSUE #105
APRIL 2005 / £3.99
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SLIPPY
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KILLER 7
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TOUCH & GO
■ BETTER THAN MARIO 64 DS?
■ FIND OUT ON PAGE 44...
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PEPPY... I THINK I LOVE YOU

TURN OVER THE PAGE!
Otherwise this will be the shortest magazine you've ever bought

Hey, fellow space frogs! I'm so, like, totally stoked to be here! Wow, it reminds me of the time I had some bogeys on my tail and I was about to wipe them off when suddenly, from nowhere…

…Oh boy! Ice cream!…

Yeah, I can probably fix it. I'm real good with a wrench. Even Fox says I'm real good. Peppy says I'm his little soldier! But Falco says bad things that Peppy says I should never repeat, even though I'm kinda grown-up for my age and I have my own set of tools which I keep real shiny! *Real* shiny.

Why am I here?

Ooh! I know! My pals at **NGC** said I had to do this because they found a new editor somewhere but then they lost him somewhere else and he won't be back until next month and they wanted me to say a few words to introduce you to the magazine, so here goes…

Slippy Toad
xxx

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WHY WE'RE No.1 FOR NINTENDO

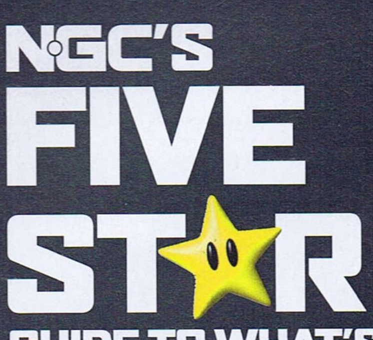
NGC's the result of over a decade of gaming genius – so you're the best-informed Nintendo gamer around.



First there was the SNES, and Super Play came out alongside it – fanboys rejoiced.

A new machine meant a new magazine – but one with the same high standards.

Now we've got Gamecube, and you've got **NGC**. That's 13 years of Ninty love right there.



GUIDE TO WHAT'S
UNMISS LE
THIS IS



STARFOX ASSAULT

THE REVIEW

Ten whole pages of it. Feel the width, people. Just feel it.



TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

ANOTHER REVIEW

But this time it isn't about foxes battling space monkeys.

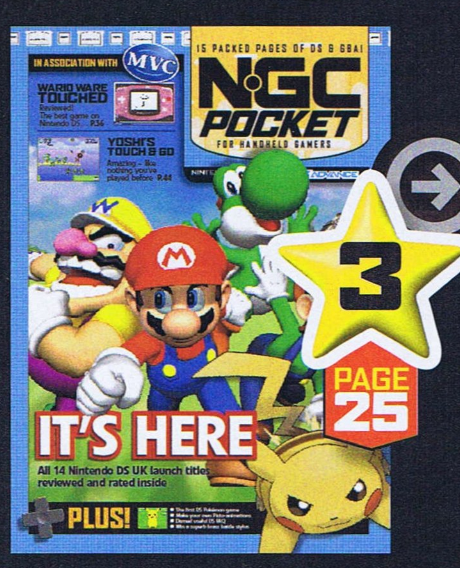




STARFOX ASSAULT

Can Fox's furry friends recapture former glories, or will Prince Tricky make a right royal mess of things?





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PAGE 84

RESI 4
EXCLUSIVE PLAYING GUIDE
How to master the most incredible game of the year.

5
PAGE 84

MAKING OF
TIMESPLITTERS 3
A look behind the scenes at one of this month's top games.

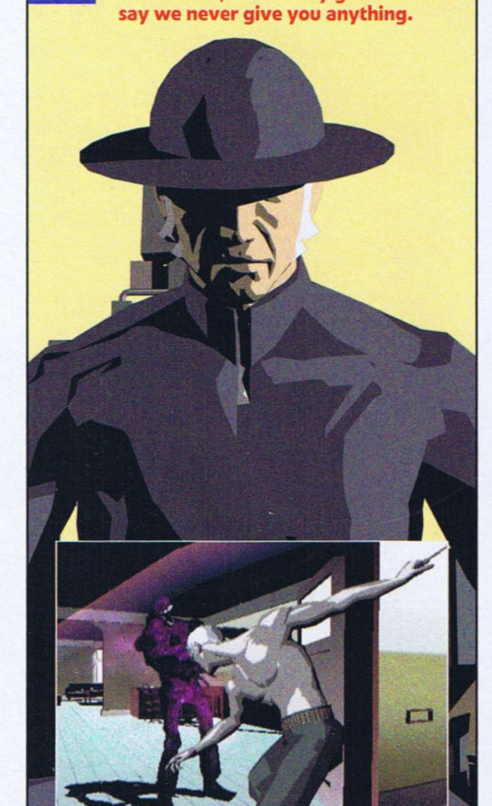
WHAT'S IN NGC?

Enough to keep you busy for a good 15 minutes of crunch time…

PREVIEWS



Amazing new games coming your way



NEWS

The latest rumours, truths and goings-on

EXTENDED PLAY

Getting more from your favourite games





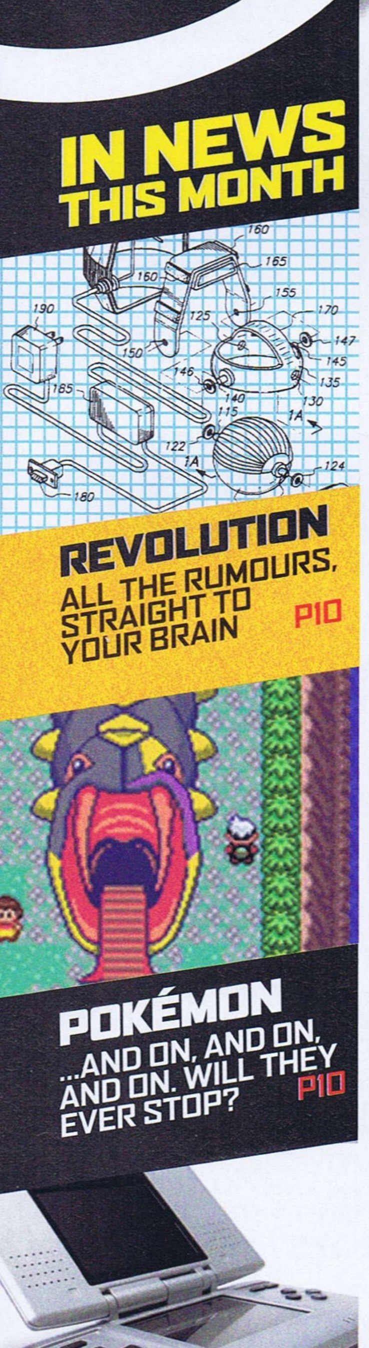
REVIEWS

Ways to blow your hard-earned cash





NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST
NEWSDESK





△ Not sure quite what it is – but it it reminds us of *Mickey's Speedway USA*. Which is... bad.

NEW MARIO KART ANNOUNCED!

...BUT IT'S NOT QUITE WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK IT IS.

It's true – there's a new Mario Kart on the way! But it's not for Gamecube or Revolution; nope, this is *Mario Kart Arcade Grand Prix*, and it comes in an enormous cabinet for use in, well, arcades.

Unveiled at the Japanese AOU arcade show, the game runs on Triforce hardware (created jointly by Nintendo, Namco and Sega) and is geared specifically towards multiplayer action. While it's some way off release – autumn in Japan – four-player support is a cert and there's the possibility of eight-way link-up, which sounds ace. And it appears to be a more traditional Mario Kart than *Double Dash*; only one driver, proper karts, and there's even the return of both coins to collect *and* a hop-based powerslide.

Elsewhere, you can expect 11 playable characters, incorporating the usual suspects plus, as the game is being co-developed with Namco, Pac-Man and Ms Pac-Man. Power-ups are also present, although the system is slightly different from other Mario Karts here; you start off with three and can collect more as you race. Unbelievably, early reports of the game say there are over 100 items to use. Which is simply madness, if it's true.

Perhaps best of all, the game uses Namco's 'Nam-Cam', which takes a picture of the player and twiddles it depending on the character you're using (so if you're playing Mario, you'll get a comedy moustache and hat). Your photo is then displayed above your kart on opponent's screens so they can see who they're racing – a brilliant touch. We'll have more as soon as is humanly possible.

WILL IT COME TO GAMECUBE?

That's the big question on everybody's lips (we imagine). And so far the answer is 'we don't know'. The last Triforce-based arcade game was *F-Zero AX*, and Gamecube's *F-Zero GX* contained AX's vehicles and tracks as unlockables, meaning there's a good chance *Mario Kart Arcade* might make some kind of transition to the GC. With a whopping 24 tracks it's certainly properly sized, too; here's hoping we get a conversion. We'll keep you posted on any news.



EASY PEASY?

Nintendo's credo of allowing everyone, regardless of ability, to fully enjoy a game reaches an apex in *Mario Kart Arcade*. It sports a 'rubber band' system where losing players get some helpful boost action so they can catch up with the race leaders. Excellent balancing ploy or skill-destroying artifice? The jury's still out at the moment.

A LINK TO THE FUTURE

Zelda producer spills the beans… sort of

Eiji Aonuma, producer of the new Zelda game, was interviewed by French mag Liberation this month, and had one or two titbits to drop about the most anticipated game of the year. He confirmed that it'll be set after *The Wind Waker*, and that it'll be released at the end of 2005 in Japan (and while no mention was made of European and US launch dates, we're quietly confident of a simultaneous worldwide launch). Other than that, though, he wouldn't let any other details slip, except for this: "I can reveal one lone secret: it'll be very, very beautiful.

Aonuma had more to say on the subject of a DS-based Zelda, though, confirming that there's one in the works, and that, "Our ideas for *Four Swords* have greatly contributed to the concept behind the DS." This last comment has got us all at **NGC** Towers jolly excited indeed; imagine wireless co-operative multiplayer Zelda without the need for a Gamecube and a GBA. Sadly, no release date was given for DS Zelda, but with E3 just around the corner, it can only be a matter of time…

WHEN IS ZELDA REALLY OUT?

Well, it's definitely this year. But could it be sooner than expected? Mr Aonuma says the tail-end of 2005, but the press area of Nintendo's own website still has the game down as a mysterious 'Q2' release, leading to much internet-based optimism over an early release for the game. We suggest Ninty haven't updated their release dates yet, although we'd love to be surprised.

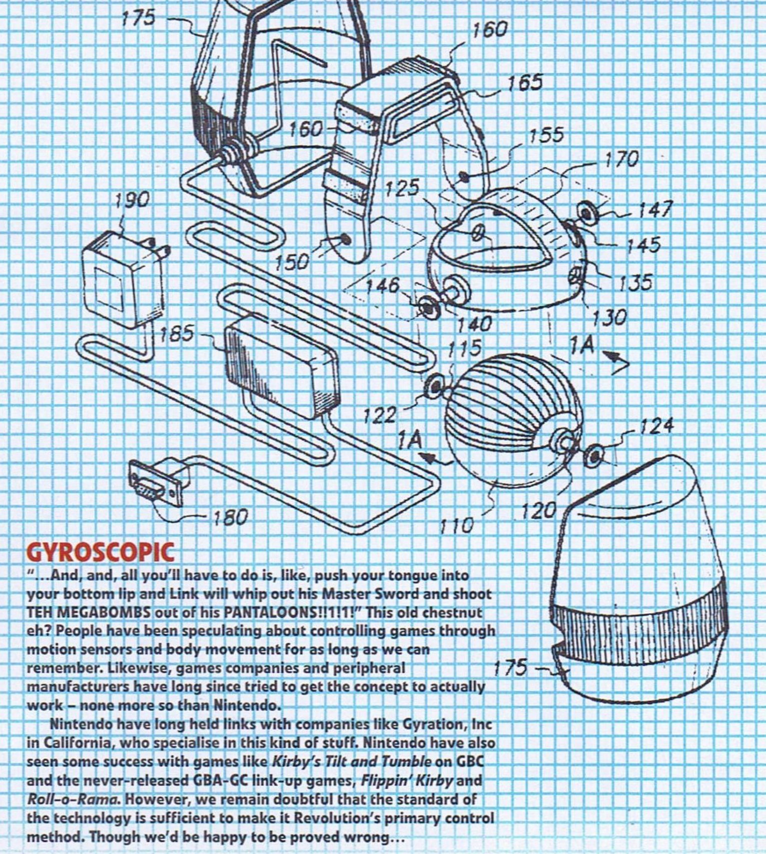
SHORT CUTS

KILLER 7 DELAYED

Yup, Capcom's latest, weirdest masterpiece has been put back to June, meaning you'll have to wait a little longer for your fix of head-messing schizophrenic assassination fun. The good news, however, is that it looks like the game's getting a worldwide release, meaning we should get it at the same time as the Japanese and Americans!



△ Nice try, but it looks very similar to a Dolphin concept sketch from five years ago.



GYROSCOPIC

"...And, and, all you'll have to do is, like, push your tongue into your bottom lip and Link will whip out his Master Sword and shoot TEH MEGABOMBS out of his PANTALOONS!!1!1!" This old chestnut eh? People have been speculating about controlling games through motion sensors and body movement for as long as we can remember. Likewise, games companies and peripheral manufacturers have long since tried to get the concept to actually work – none more so than Nintendo.

Nintendo have long held links with companies like Gyration, Inc in California, who specialise in this kind of stuff. Nintendo have also seen some success with games like *Kirby's Tilt and Tumble* on GBC and the never-released GBA-GC link-up games, *Flippin' Kirby* and *Roll-o-Rama*. However, we remain doubtful that the standard of the technology is sufficient to make it Revolution's primary control method. Though we'd be happy to be proved wrong...

LOOK! IT'S THE REVOLUTION!

Word is, Shigeru's mum stole this mock-up out of his sock drawer and posted it on a forum under the handle 'Linkroolz5469'. Turns out this isn't strictly true though – by the admission of the guy who actually made it. Still, you can taste the anticipation of a new console the minute people start making renders that look like futuristic potties. Expect plenty more of these to surface over the next few months.

DADDY OR CHIPS?

Woah, woah, *woah*! Hold the freakin' front page! News doesn't get any more exciting than this. Elpida Memory Inc, a chip manufacturer in Japan are said to be talking to Nintendo about supplying DRAM chips for the Revolution. Thing is, they happen to be the same company making chips for Playstation 3. OMG! WTF! ROFL! LMAO...!? As some people would no doubt say. But what does this mean for Revolution exactly? More to the point, who actually cares...?

HUBBA HUBBA?

This all came about because of that stupid 'Nintendo21' rumour (and quite diabolical picture) that we showed you last month. The idea is that the Revolution acts as some kind of hub, connecting all Revolutions together into one glorious network. Now, through the unfaltering magic of Chinese whispery, this has grown to encompass ideas such as downloadable game content, negating the need for disks or cartridges or any of that 20th century rubbish. Still, we have to admit that anything's possible. An out-of-the-box, online-ready machine is perfectly feasible, and Valve's Steam service for *Half-Life 2* has shown that downloadable content (while not without its problems) is a very real possibility.

REVOLUTION SPECULATION

More rumour-mongering and outright rubbishness, straight off the internet and right onto this page...





BYE BYE?

Nintendo have always been the pioneering force behind the evolution of game controllers. Could we soon be saying goodbye to classic input devices like D-Pads and buttons before embracing something new?

LOOK MUM! NO BUTTONS!

No D-Pad. No A and B buttons. Rumours suggests that Nintendo will abandon the classic joypad interface that's been the industry standard (in some way shape or form) ever since the NES. After all, if you're going to revolutionise the way we play games, the means of inputting commands is the most obvious target for an overhaul. Nintendo have said that the DS, with its touch screen control, suggests the direction that Revolution. Does this mean that it too will boast touch screen control? Maybe with some kind of graphics tablet-style controller (where developers have the ability to create their own interfaces). The possibilities are both endless and confusing.

HANDS OFF?

It won't be playable at E3. Actually, there's every possibility that this is true. Nintendo's Chief of Public Relations, Ken Toyota recently stated that, while E3 would be the starting point for the Revolution, Nintendo aren't sure what, exactly, they're going to show. "We've yet to decide whether we will show the real machine, videos or unveil the concept... We want to receive some level of evaluation, but releasing too much information is another issue... Right now, we're thinking of how we can accurately convey to people at E3 the different path that the Revolution will take." We wouldn't be surprised if they simply explained the concept behind Revolution, maybe *some* hardware details, and showed off some tech demos and trailers.

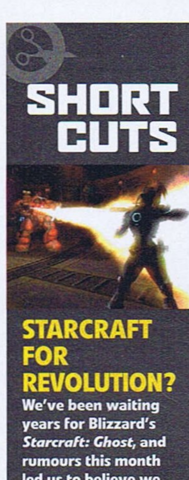
DEV KIT?

Has some unscrupulous developer risked life and limb (and reproductive appendage) by taking snaps of his newly acquired 'Revolution Development Kit', or is that the foul stench of internet fakery wafting through the air. Our money's on the latter...




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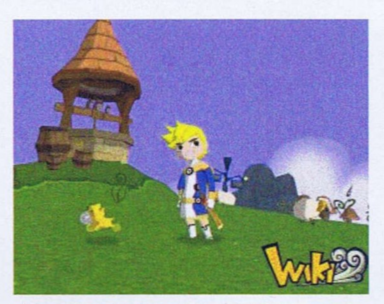


STARCRAFT FOR REVOLUTION?

We've been waiting years for Blizzard's *Starcraft: Ghost*, and rumours this month led us to believe we might be waiting for a few more, as it appeared that the game was going to become a Revolution title. The reason why? The Blizzard product catalogue that came with PC role-player *World of Warcraft* stated the game would be released for 'next-generation consoles'. Blizzard have since stated that *Ghost* is still slated for a Gamecube release, however, and that the catalogue's info was erroneous. There's still no release date for the game, though…

GEIST NO GHOST!

Geist lives! Not that it ever really died. But it's been so long since we've heard anything of Nintendo's possess-'em-up first-person shooter that we assumed it had simply fallen off the radar or been quietly canned. But no! It's still around, and ready for release sooner than you think. Indeed, it's going to be out in the US in May – no UK date has been established yet – which is great news. Although *Geist*'s true quality has never really been established, it's certainly intriguing, seeing you play as a 'spectral operative', able to possess people, animals and machines in order to progress.



Δ Does this look familiar at all? It reminds us of, um… oooh… er… wassisname…



Δ …yeah, him. Him with the shifty eyes that won't stay still. Never trusted him.

WIKI VS ZELDA

Nintendo catch a whiff of Linky-stinkery



You can't blame them really. Just one look at that *Wiki* picture and it's hard to see anyone other than Link staring back at you – which is why Nintendo have raised their concerns that *Wiki*, a Massively Multiplayer Online game from South Korean publishers, Webzen, may violate trademarks from *Wind Waker*. In Webzen's defence, spokesperson Choi Hyun Woo stated that, being a MMO game, the main character of *Wiki* doesn't have a fixed image – and that the picture (above) is just one permutation out of tens of thousands of possible clothes, hairstyles and features available to players when they create their avatar. The game isn't released until next year anyway. More than enough time to get Nintendo's lawyers off their backs then.

GBA 2 IN 2005

According to who?



According to industry analyst PJ McNealy, the next evolution of Nintendo's Game Boy could well surface as early as the end of this year. And his reasons? Well, Nintendo releases a new Game Boy iteration on average every two years, so it's about time another came along. Secondly, the GBA carts are easy to pirate and so it's time to move over to a new format. Thirdly, the DS hasn't made much of an impact on GBA sales so there's plenty of room for another version. And, finally: "A new GBA provides Nintendo with a fun, new device while Sony focuses on PSP."

Well done to PJ for some pretty sound reasoning. Funnily enough Nintendo haven't announced or confirmed anything of the sort, and we don't expect them to until next year at the earliest…

MORE POKÉMON



We've had a Japanese copy of *Pokémon Emerald* knocking about for ages and we have to admit that, despite being a very similar game to *Ruby* and *Sapphire*, it has enough differences (like the single-player expanding 'battle frontier' and improved two-on-two battles) to make the update worth your attention. So any importers among you may want to note the 1st of May in your diaries, as that's when the English translation is released in the States. There have also been rumours about *Pokémon Diamond* and *Pearl* for the DS could well be released in Japan as early as November – so expect to see something about these during E3 at the end of May.





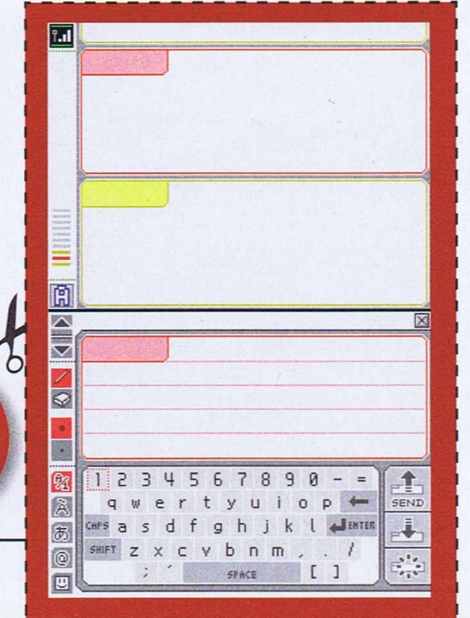
WIN A DS!



We have *five* DS's to give away. If you want one, all you have to do is make us laugh. Next to this info you'll find some blank Pictochat message space. We want you to fill in the spaces with what ever you like, pictures, words – whatever. Just bear in mind that it should be funny enough that we don't just throw your entry in the bin. The first five that get at least one member of the **NGC** team to chuckle, giggle, guffaw or (in Kittsy's case) simply crack a smile, will bag themselves a DS. Simply cut out, or photocopy, the Pictochat entry slip, scribble your doodle or message onto it and send it off to the following address:

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ULTRA RELEASE LIST

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UK RELEASES

The most accurate listing available – although be aware that slippages can occur. All titles Gamecube unless otherwise stated.

MARCH

18	Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	Atari
18	Resident Evil 4	Capcomt
25	Puyo Pop Fever (GBA)	THQ
25	Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams	THQ
25	Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams (GBA)	THQ
25	Timesplitters Future Perfect	EA
TBC	Atari Classics (DS)	Atari

APRIL

1	Viewtiful Joe 2	Capcom
1	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft
1	Tom Clancy's Spinter Cell Chaos Theory	Ubisoft
8	Fairly Odd Parents: Shadow Showdown	THQ
8	Fairly Odd Parents: Shadow Showdown (GBA)	THQ
11	Bionicle: Maze of Shadows (GBA)	THQ
14	NGC out today	
15	Kao The Kangaroo Round 2	JoWood
TBC	LEGO Star Wars (GBA)	Eidos
30	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: BattleNexus	Konami

MAY

11	Advance Wars: Under Fire	Nintendo
TBC	Madagascar	Activision
TBC	Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith (DS)	Ubisoft
TBC	Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith (GBA)	Ubisoft

JUNE

24	Killer 7	Capcom

JULY

12	Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories (GBA)	Nintendo

SPRING

Boktai 2: Solar Boy Django (GBA)	Konami
Medal of Honor: Dogs of War	EA
Metroid Prime Hunters: First Hunt (DS)	Nintendo

SUMMER

Batman Begins	EA
Batman Begins (GBA)	EA
The Incredible Hulk	Vivendi

TBC 2005

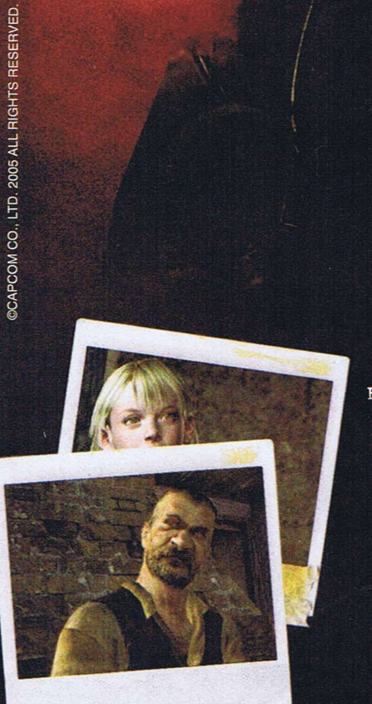
Advance Wars DS (working title) (DS)	Nintendo
Alien Hominid	Zoo Digital
Alien vs Predator (GBA)	Ubisoft
Altered Beast: Guardian of the Realms (GBA)	Atari
Animal Crossing (DS)	Nintendo
Another Code (DS)	Nintendo
Backyard Football (GBA)	Atari
Boktai (working title) (DS)	Konami
Bomberman (DS)	Hudson
Caduceus (DS)	Atlus
Castlevania (working title) (DS)	Konami
Codename: Kids Next Door (GBA)	Take 2
Custom Robo	Nintendo
Custom Robo GX (GBA)	Nintendo
Dora the Explorer: Super Star Adventures (GBA)	Take 2
Dragon Ball Z (DS)	Banpresto
Dragon Booster	Konami
Dragon Booster (DS)	Konami
Dragon Quest Monsters (working title) (DS)	Square Enix
Dynasty Warriors (DS)	Koei
Egg Monster Heroes (DS)	Square Enix
F1	Zoo Digital
Fantastic Four	Activision
Final Fantasy III (DS)	Square Enix
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles (working title) (DS)	Square Enix
Fire Emblem	Nintendo
Fire Emblem: The Sacred Stones (GBA)	Nintendo
Frogger 2005	Konami
Frogger 2005 (DS)	Konami
Funkydilla	Zoonami
Game Zero (working title)	Zoonami
Ganbare Goemon (DS)	Konami
GB Rally 2 Advance (GBA)	Raylight
Geist	Nintendo
GoldenEye: Rogue Agent (DS)	EA
GTX (GBA)	Graphic State
Harvest Moon (DS)	Natsume
The Incredibles 2 (working title)	THQ
Jam with the Band (working title) (DS)	Nintendo
Jet Set Willy (GBA)	Jester
Jump Superstars (DS)	Nintendo
Kirby Adventure (working title)	Nintendo
Kururin Paradise (GBA)	Nintendo
Lamborghini FX	Avalon
The Legend of Zelda	Nintendo
The Legend of Zelda DS (working title) (DS)	Nintendo
The Legend of Zelda: Tetra's Trackers (GBA)	Nintendo
Looney Tunes: Back in Action (GBA)	EA
Madden NFL 2005 (DS)	EA
Madden NFL 2005 (GBA)	EA
Mario Baseball	Nintendo
Mario Kart DS	Nintendo
Mario Party Advance (GBA)	Nintendo
Mega Man Battle Network (DS)	Capcom
Meteos (DS)	Bandai
Mighty Beanz	Majesco
Mobile Suit Gundam Seed (DS)	Bandai
Monster Rancher (DS)	Tecmo
Moonlight Fables (DS)	Majesco
The Movies	Activision
Mr Driller 2 (GBA)	Namco
Nanostray (DS)	Majesco
Need for Speed Underground (DS)	EA
Nightmare Before Christmas: The Pumpkin King (GBA)	Buena Vista
Nintendo Puzzle Collection	Nintendo
Odama	Nintendo
Oggy and the Cockroaches (GBA)	Telegames
One Piece (DS)	Bandai
Pac-Man Pinball (GBA)	Namco
Pac'n Roll (DS)	Namco
Pac-Pix (DS)	Namco
The Phantom (GBA)	MC2-Microids
Pocky and Rocky with Becky (GBA)	Natsume
Pokémon Diamond (DS)	Nintendo
Pokémon GC	Nintendo
Pokémon Pearl (DS)	Nintendo
Puppy Times (working title) (DS)	Nintendo
Puyo Pop Fever (DS)	Sega
Rave Master: Special Attack Force (GBA)	Konami
Retro Atari Classics (DS)	Atari
Robots (DS)	Vivendi
Robots (GBA)	Vivendi
Room Zoom: Race for Impact	Jaleco
Secret of Mana (DS)	Square Enix
Scooby Doo! Unmasked	THQ
Scooby Doo! Unmasked (GBA)	THQ
Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder 2 (GBA)	Activision
Sigma Star Saga (GBA)	Namco
Snowboard Kids DS (DS)	Atlus
Sonic DS (working title) (DS)	Sega
Space Raiders	Taito
SpongeBob SquarePants (DS)	THQ
Starcraft: Ghost	Vivendi
Super Mario Bros (DS)	Nintendo
Super Princess Peach (DS)	Nintendo
Survival Kids: Lost In Blue (DS)	Konami
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Mutant Melee	Konami
Touch! Kirby's Magic Paintbrush (DS)	Nintendo
Torque	JoWooD
Turbo Turtle Adventure (GBA)	Iridon
Ultimate Brain Games (DS)	Telegames
Ultimate Card Games (DS)	Telegames
Ultimate Pocket Games (DS)	Telegames
Vandal Hearts (working title) (DS)	Konami
Viewtiful Joe (DS)	Capcom
Virtua Quest	Sega
WINX (working title) (DS)	Konami
World Championship Pool 2004	Jaleco
World Championship Poker	Crave
World Soccer Winning Eleven Series (working title) (DS)	Konami
Yoshi's Universal Gravitation (GBA)	Nintendo
Yoshi's Touch and Go (working title) (DS)	Nintendo
Yu-Gi-Oh! Destiny Board Traveller (GBA)	Konami
Yu-Gi-Oh! Nightmare Troubadour (DS)	Konami
Yu Yu Spirit Detective (GBA)	Atari
Zoids (DS)	Tomy

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The past is never dead and buried

Leon S. Kennedy has put the past behind him.
He survived the outbreak in Raccoon City six years ago.

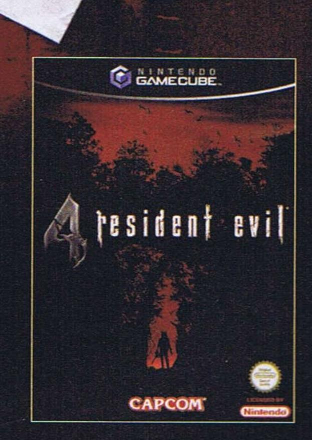
Now a government agent, he is sent to a remote European village. heres something wrong with the villagers

The President's daughter has been
- kidnapped
the nightmares never end

evil evolves

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ONLY FOR NINTENDO GAMECUBE

PREVIEWS



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Mental cel-shaded graphics.
- First-person shooty bits.
- Some point-and-click style adventure sections.
- There will be seven different playable characters.
- Extremely odd indeed.

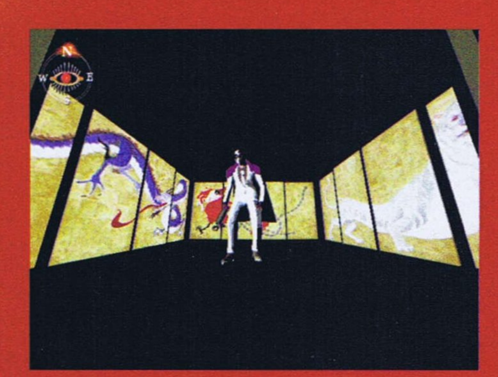
FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Capcom

What have they done before?
Resident Evil 4 (NGC/104, 97%)
The best game on Gamecube, and then some. Fact!



△ Who on earth is this? A new personality of Harman Smith's? Well, that would be telling, wouldn't it...





KILLER 7

Baffling, bloody and brilliant, Capcom's latest game is going to mess with your head...



This month we had the grand opportunity to visit Capcom's annual showcase event in Las Vegas, where we got the chance to see *Killer 7* in action. And we can tell you this; while the game is undoubtedly far, far weirder than we ever thought possible, it's also looking simply astonishing - but it's going to be an acquired taste.

Capcom's latest, you see, is an avowed attempt to be a completely new approach to games. Everything within it springs from the narrative, and it is more akin - first-person bits aside - to a point-and click adventure than anything else. You have no control over movement other than to select destinations; indeed, it has been suggested that the game would work perfectly as a lightgun game, as it's more about clicking on options than anything else - and in the first-person bits, you're only controlling the crosshair.

But it's not a lightgun game, and to reduce the experience of *Killer 7* to simply clicking on options does it a huge disservice. Indeed, it's almost unclassifiable, so different is it to other games. But we have learned some interesting new things about the game.

For instance, our hero Harman Smith actually has more than seven personalities, although you won't get to play as them. Take Samantha, for instance, a nurse who impossibly takes care of Harman and gets all kinky when he's in a coma. We also found out that you don't actually play as Garcian, one of the dominant personalities - but he does retrieve killed personalities' body parts and put them in his briefcase. And it gets weirder; one of the bosses drags his brain along behind him; blood is used as experience points (the phrase "tasty, tasty blood" keeps popping up) and a disembodied head called Suzie pops up every now and then to help ▶

> "THIS IS AN AVOWED ATTEMPT TO BE A COMPLETELY NEW APPROACH TO GAMES"

SHOOT TO THRILL

There appears to be a lot of shootin' in *Killer 7*, and each of the seven character's skills provide different weapons and abilities for killin'.

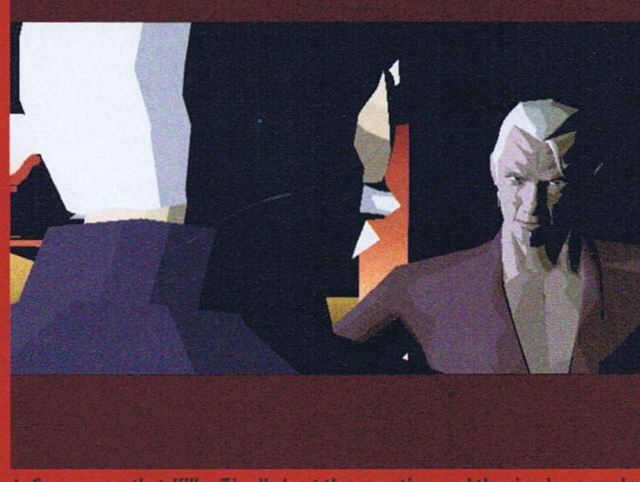



■ There's seems to be a large focus on different hit locations – a little like in *Resident Evil 4*. We surmise that certain enemies will be vulnerable in different spots. You dig?



■ Mask De Smith is a wrestler, who also happens to have grenade launchers.

■ These beasts are people infected by the dastardly Heaven's Smile organisation. Shoot them!



△ Capcom say that *Killer 7* is all about the narrative, and the simple gameplay is a result of keeping the story as prominent as possible. It looks amazing.



△ A man on a balcony, yesterday. Who is he? We don't know. Hmm.

△ Shady governmental goings on, we'd wager. All very interesting.



△ You don't control movement in the first-person sections – just your aim.



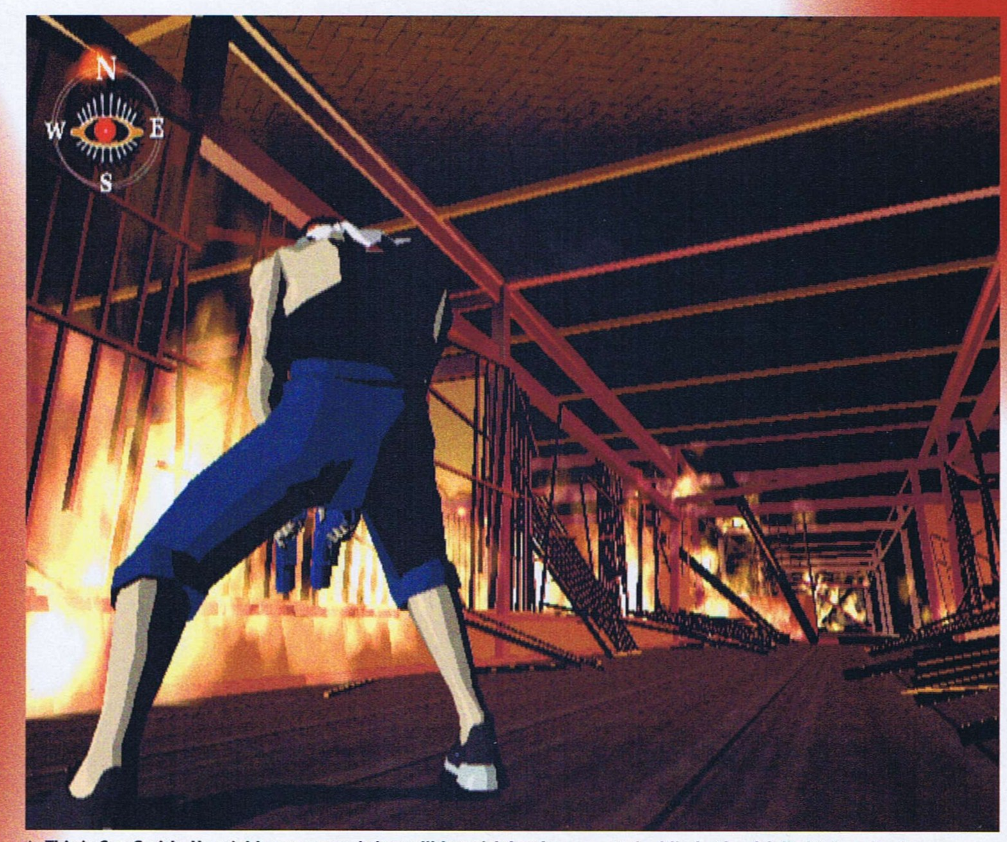
you out. It's all a bit too much to assimilate.

We also got the chance to speak to the game's producer, Hiroyuki Kobayashi. Here's what he had to say...

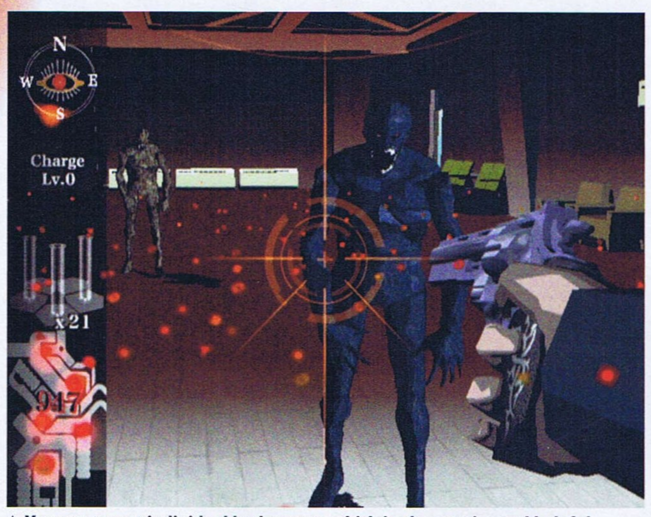
NGC: This game is retro in terms of the interface, this kind of revisits point-and-click games. Was that a conscious decision?

HK: This goes back to our desire to create a game that's completely different to anything you've seen up until now, to have the analogue stick push in one direction and you have the different 'select formulas' – do you want to go through the door, and so on. It's all part of our vision. And when you're fighting the Heaven's Smiles there's an action element and you do need to learn how to operate the controls so you can zap 'em in the right spot, but really what I'm hoping people will focus on in this game is the individual peculiarities and characteristics of the characters and how they fit in with this story that expands and develops throughout the game. That's what we're hoping people will find interesting and fun.

NGC: Are you concerned that some gamers might not appreciate the visual style in *Killer 7*, and feel alienated because of it?

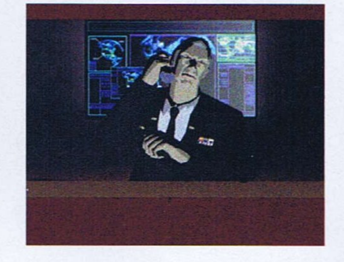


△ This is Con Smith. He wields two guns, is incredibly quick but happens to be blind – thankfully his hearing is super.



△ You can target individual body parts, which is always nice and helpful.





HK: We understood from the very beginning that this wasn't going to be something that everybody would be into; we knew that this game was going to appeal to a certain core audience, people that probably give it ten out of ten, but the people that aren't into it, the *Mario* fans and *Tiger Woods* golf people, will think, no, zero! It's like Tarantino, the movie director – there are people who love his

"WE DIDN'T HAVE THE MADDEN SPORTS FANS IN MIND, THIS WASN'T MADE FOR THEM!"

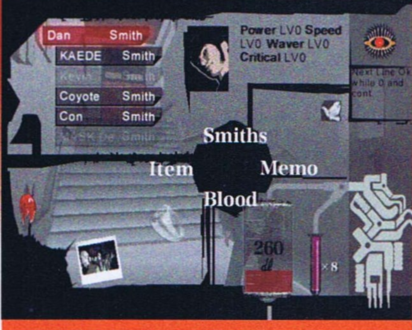
would appreciate this visual style, this world view. We didn't have the Madden sports fans in mind, this wasn't made for them! So how can we worry about it? The folks that are really into this game will films, no matter what, but there are others who hate them.

NGC: Did you feel you had too many ideas? At any point did you have to reign in or tone any ideas?

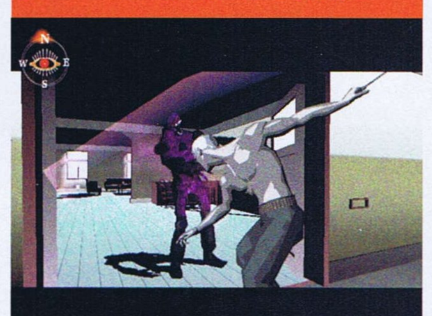
HK: That was all we did the whole time! One example we can give you is of the game screen – when you're playing the game, and getting more and more damaged, the screen would almost be like damaged glass, like a cracked windshield, but you can't even play the game when you can't see what's going on!

Interesting stuff, eh? It's worth pointing out that even though we saw the game in action, Capcom still kept both how the game plays and the plot very much a mystery. They ain't telling. It's this sense of the unknown that makes *Killer 7* as exicting as it is - roll on June, eh?

MYSTERY!



■ Looks like there will also be a modicum of RPGing - see the stats? - and detective work (what could the memo option mean?) in *Killer 7*, which further solidifies suspicions that the game has a strong storyline. Intriguing, eh?

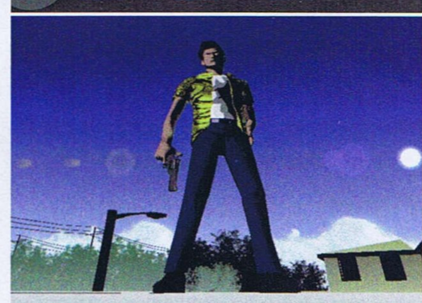


■ Will the skills of each of the personalities have applications other than in combat? Kevin Smith, here, can travel through shadows, apparently - presumably this has consequences beyond fighting. We're itching to find out.

NGC VERDICT



UK JUNE | US JUNE | JAPAN JUNE



We're not really much closer to understanding how *Killer 7* will play, but one thing's for sure; it's much, much weirder than we ever thought it might be. We reckon it's going to be one of those game's you either 'get' - like *Rez* on the PS2 - or don't, and that it'll divide gamers radically. One thing's for sure, though - you've never seen anything like this, and that's a *good* thing.

ANTICIPATION RATING






SHINY SHINY

See how some of these shots have a kind of glistening, realistic look to them? That'll be something called 'normal mapping' which is a fancy-arse graphical technique that makes things look like they're wrapped in clingfilm.

△ Sam's rope was an agonising 10m too short to reach the floor.

THE KNOWLEDGE

- Sam Fisher returns for more stealthy thrills, this time with the aid of 'open levels' that allow you to tackle missions as you see fit.
- An improved alarm system that means it's not game over once you set too many off – you can now fight your way out of trouble.
- Specially designed co-operative mode for two players, with four tailor-made levels that require proper teamwork to crack.
- New weapons, moves and equipment.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Ubisoft

What have they done before?
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow (NGC/97 78%)
Splinter Cell sequel that, while excellent in places, is really just more of the same.

SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

Shiny black gimp suits and creeping around in the dark. It can only be… Friday night chez Kitts!



Last year's *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* was great, but more of the same. While it added a couple of new moves and technological widgets to the *Splinter Cell* template, it failed to improve on its predecessor's faults and, as good as it was, seems in retrospect to be more of an expansion pack than a brand-new game.

Indeed, compared to *Chaos Theory*, Sam Fisher's third outing at the forefront of international espionage, *Pandora Tomorrow* looks like nothing less than a stop-gap. *This* is the real deal, a concerted effort to make *Splinter Cell* better, and a genuine step forward for the series. It is, to be frank, looking absolutely cracking.



"COMPARED TO CHAOS THEORY... PANDORA TOMORROW LOOKS LIKE NOTHING LESS THAN A STOP-GAP"

Whereas previous *Splinter Cells* resembled nothing more than elaborate puzzle games, being linear and offering a single path through the game. *Chaos Theory* is far more flexible and open. While Ubisoft reckon it is entirely possible to get through the whole game without killing a single guard, the possibility of a more action-based experience is there. For instance, before each mission your weapons and equipment can be tailored for either a stealth-based approach or a more offensive mindset, and this goes hand in hand with both the new alarm system and the way *Chaos Theory*'s levels have been designed.

No longer does setting three alarms off mean it's game over. This time around, the more alarms you set off, the more guards you'll have to contend with – and they'll be packing heat, too. This overhauled system means that you at least get the chance to fight your way out of trouble and lay low until things quieten down – which is a welcome change.

No longer is the game all about deciphering what exactly needs to be done to get from point A to point B. Your objectives are now more flexible





Don't mind him – he's got his hands full with this internet porn business.





THREE'S A CHARM

Three succinct reasons why *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory* will rock your socks off and, in all probability, float your boat





PLAY TOGETHER

■ The co-operative mode is fabulous and encourages proper interaction between players. It also coincides with the plotline of the main story. It may only be four levels long, but it's cracker.

YOU DECIDE

■ Objectives can be tackled in any order and levels are now 'open', meaning the game is no longer a hard linear paragon of trial and error. It flows better and you can fight your way out of trouble.



IT'S GORGEOUS

■ It really is. Granted, much of the time you'll be squirreled away in darkness and using night vision or infra-red goggles, which hardly shows off the graphics, but *Chaos Theory* is simply stupendous-looking. Fact!

– meaning you're not tied to attempting them in order – and the levels themselves offer huge scope for exploration, letting you try to crack missions in the way that you want to. While some may argue that opening up the game might lose some of the tension that *Splinter Cell* is known for, from what we've seen it makes for a much more satisfying and interesting gaming experience.

So the single-player game's shaping up very nicely, but there's also multiplayer to look forward to – although not the head-to-head action that you'll get on PS2 and Xbox. Nope, we'll have a brand-new co-op mode, designed for two players, with puzzles that take full advantage of, well, co-operation. You'll need to work together to eliminate guards. It's only four levels long but it sounds like great fun and genuinely innovative, rather than simply dropping a second player into the single-player levels. We have to say, we're quite excited indeed.



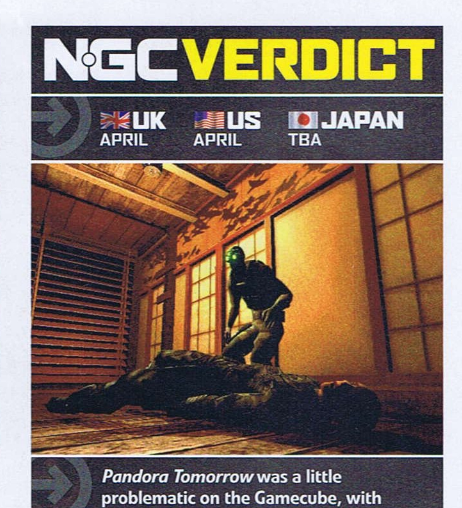
The lock-picking minigame returns, now with added realistic-o-vision to train a whole new generation of burglars in the art of Yale evasion.





NGC VERDICT

UK APRIL | US APRIL | JAPAN TBA



Pandora Tomorrow was a little problematic on the Gamecube, with simplified levels and unforgiving AI, but *Chaos Theory* looks set to rectify those problems whilst offering some new additions. The lack of competitive multiplayer is annoying, but otherwise this is shaping up to be the best *Splinter Cell* yet – and that's saying something.



ANTICIPATION RATING



HOPPING MAD...

Last time we looked, kangaroos move at about 2,000 mph and the last time we looked they hopped. So we'd like someone to explain why Kao, most of the time, jogs (not hops) around at about 5 mph (or thereabouts).



THE KNOWLEDGE

- There are 20 levels to hop around set in 'diverse' areas such as the arctic and Australia.
- As well as Kao, you can control his mate, Carlos the Crazy Pelican. You also get to ride a badger.
- Beat up 30 different enemies. You can deck them with your boxing gloves, tail whip them or hit them with a boomerang.
- You can drive a motorboat, go snowboarding and use a flying helmet to get around.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Tate Interactive

What have they done before?
This is Tate Interactive's first Gamecube game.



△ It's what you've always wanted to do: herding badgers.







KAO THE KANGAROO ROUND 2

Meet Kao – he wants to be Rayman when he grows up…

Slice off *Rayman's* annoying floppy ears, give him some bloody arms and legs and you'd be close to *Kao the Kangaroo*. Okay, there'd be a bit more work to do, such as making him bounce, giving him fur and a pouch, but you get the picture.



> **IT TICKS ALL THE STANDARD BOXES AND LOOKS VERY RAYMAN**

Yep, with its lava levels, cute animals and coin collecting, this is looking like average platformer territory. But while Kao's first outing was slagged off for being simplistic platform hopping for kids, *Kao the Kangaroo Round 2* can be rock hard. At the start you just have to punch in some beardy blokes with big hammers and rescue some beavers, but later on, when you play as Carlos the Pelican, flapping between platforms, it can reach Wavebird-chucking levels of frustration. You only have five flaps to get between platforms, but the last few flights are very long and you have to time each flap perfectly to make it. A kids' game? This will make grown men weep. Then there's the snowboarding bit, where you have to get Kao's flips and grinds dead on, before being chased into the screen by an avalanche. It's stupidly hard, but at least it has badgers in there.

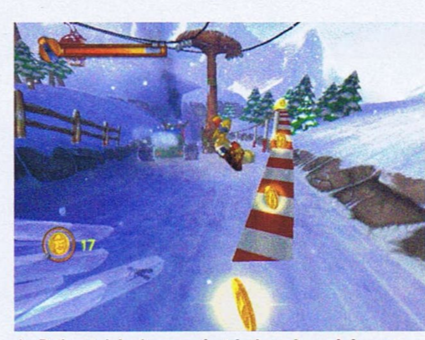
With a cute character running around ice, underwater and mine cart levels it ticks all the standard boxes and it looks very *Rayman*. With a few tough and original challenges, Kao might have a little more to him than our favourite limbless Frenchie. We said 'might'…



△ How does Kao chuck rocks with his boxing gloves on? Now that's skill...



△ Haven't we seen this before. It's one of those *Crash Bandicoot* 'running into the screen' levels.



△ Doing tricks is easy, but being chased down a slope by a massive truck isn't.

NGC VERDICT

UK 15TH APR | US WHO | JAPAN CARES?



Next time Tate make a platformy adventure we'd suggest they look first to *Mario* rather than *Rayman* and *Crash Bandicoot*. Whilst this has a few funny touches, visually it is very similar to Ubisoft's platform 'hero' and it has plenty of those *Crash* style chase scenes – there's nothing new here. Still, at least it will be challenging.

ANTICIPATION RATING





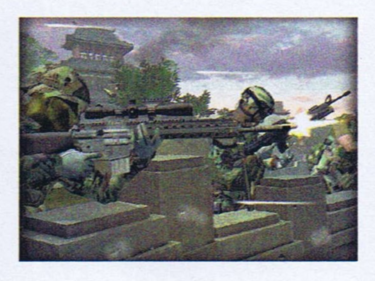


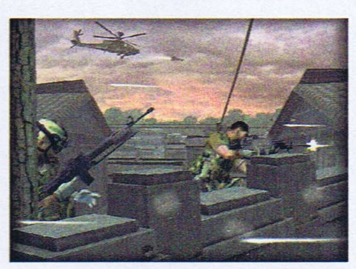


HANDS ON CLANCY

The game is due for release on 1st April, but review code wasn't ready in time to receive a good going over in this month's issue. We'll give you the full lowdown next time. Here's hoping you can stand the anticipation!









THE KNOWLEDGE

- 14 missions in evil North Korea.
- Squad-based levels.
- Lone wolf levels with just one soldier versus the entire North Korean army.
- Officially sanctioned by Tom Clancy, so at least you know the weapons are nice and realistic.
- Built on the *Unreal* 'engine'.







FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Ubisoft

What have they done before?
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow (NGC/97 78%)
Atmospheric stealth-'em-up. Not the greatest conversion though.

GHOST RECON 2

US defence secretary Tom Clancy gets all gung-ho in this Spec Ops sequel.



Give it a couple of years and the US will be bringing justice to North Korea. At least that's the way it's going to go down according to Ubisoft's latest Clancy-branded army sim, and who are we to argue?

Unfortunately this belated Gamecube version of *Ghost Recon 2* isn't based on the decent Xbox version. It's a port of the comparatively poor PS2 edition, which is a completely different game developed by a completely different team, and it's therefore quite hard to recommend, that is unless you've always wanted a Clancy-based Doom-style shoot-'em-up.

Instead of the usual detailed squad commands and tactical planning of missions, the game is essentially a series of long corridors filled with gun-toting Korean soldiers. Each level must be completed in a single attempt, since there are no save points along the way, and with no health packs to ease your progress through difficult patches, it's a tough journey.

You can issue simple orders to your army buddies, telling them to chuck grenades, shoot over there, stay put and so on. What they won't do is provide a great deal of actual assistance – despite being elite Black Ops warriors, they're incapable of shooting straight. Most of the time they're only useful for distracting the enemy while you line up another sniper shot.

> **"HARD TO RECOMMEND UNLESS YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED A CLANCY-BASED SHOOT-'EM-UP"**

Of course nobody wants to play a game where the computer takes care of all the interesting bits, which is why, as a resolutely single-player experience, *Ghost Recon 2* forces you to perpetrate the vast majority of the killing. In some missions your buddies get taken away, leaving you free to continue in lone wolf



BORN TO KILL

How your buddies can be more hindrance than help

POW-WOW

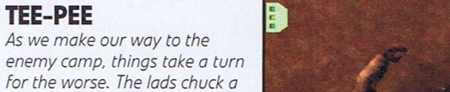
We're right at the start of the game, and our elite army mates gather in the North Korean hills to formulate a cunning plan that will almost certainly involve killing lots and lots of North Korean soldiers. Luckily there's only one route forwards, and the enemy soldiers are thoughtful enough to line up along the way. Cheers!





WIG-WAM

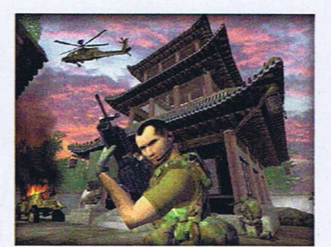
A little further along the track we find what we're looking for. Stepping beyond the appropriate trigger point makes those dumb Koreans come a-running. Holding down the A-button makes our boys grenade them to death, in a slightly excessive rain of explosive overkill. Lucky our squad can't run out of ammo.



TEE-PEE

As we make our way to the enemy camp, things take a turn for the worse. The lads chuck a few hundred more grenades to soften up the bad guys, but fail to adjust their aim to take into account the massive boulder in front of us. Run away! Run away! Oh dear. This is when we turned off the console and said, "Pff!" in a disapproving tone.





△ **Looking good while bringing freedom to grass-eating commies.**



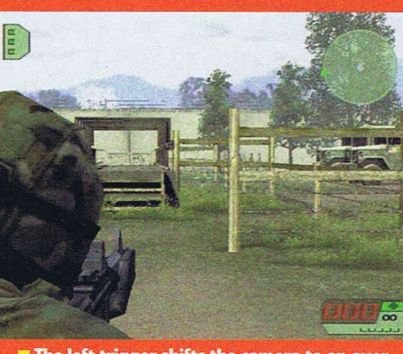
△ **This historic temple will make a perfect ammo dump for our lads.**



△ **There's now a Starbucks on the top floor. Welcome to civilisation.**

TRAINED

Our instructor does his best to get the most out of his troops in Ghost Recon's training mode. Pay attention, soldier.



■ **The left trigger shifts the camera to an over-the-shoulder perspective and zooms in a bit, so you can line up sniper shots from a decent distance. The enemies won't usually run for cover either, so you can pick them off at will.**



■ **Your squad can be controlled by holding the A-button, which brings up the soldiering command wheel. There's no way to direct them with any precision, as they just shoot or grenade in the general direction you're facing.**

△ **We love looking at this temple from various dramatic angles.**





△ **The president of North Korea eats monkeys to give himself eternal life.**



△ **Maybe Osama Bin Laden is hiding in this village. Torch it good, fellas.**

mode, which is exactly the same as before except without the benefit of covering fire.

This is Clancy-lite, and while the omission of any kind of tactical depth probably won't bother most Gamecube owners, the loss of the multiplayer modes from the other versions is a more serious negative point. The online stuff is obviously out of the question on Gamecube, but it's disappointing to find no trace of a split-screen battle mode or any co-operative missions. This sort of game would be greatly enhanced by the option to take a friend along on a campaign rather than relying on the dodgy artificial intelligence.

As far as visual realism goes, *Ghost Recon 2* is a bit variable. While some of the environments look suitably authentic, there are an awful lot of generic army camps and featureless buildings that could have come from any part of the world. Of course they could easily claim North Korea looks exactly like a pink version of the moon and nobody outside of the CIA would be in a position to argue…

Enemy soldiers all look identical at the kind of distance you tend to engage them from, but fortunately the bodies disappear long before you can confirm whether or not those crazy commies really are building a clone army.

Not that these clones are particularly impressive. They don't react when you shoot their mates in the head, while they're standing right next to them and they only pop out from their hiding places when you pass certain, unavoidable trigger points. When you waste one of them, he'll jump to his feet and fling his arms in the air before keeling over in an amusingly hammy death animation. It's out in a couple of weeks…

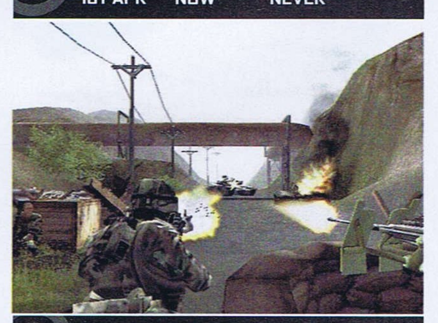
PAIN OF DEATH



We had long assumed that there was some sort of unwritten law obliging developers to put plenty of save points in their games, especially a game like this. But this is one of those increasingly rare throwbacks to the era of extreme gaming difficulty, where only losers (or 14m3Rz, if you prefer) save before the job is finished.



UK IST APR | US NOW | JAPAN NEVER



Ghost Recon 2 **has events being kicked off by something Sam Fisher discovers during the course of one of his *Splinter Cell* operations. Not that you'll care when Koreans start popping up from entirely predictable ambush points. Or when you take that last bit of damage at the end of a level and have to start again. We're not hopeful.**

ANTICIPATION RATING






Touch Me

Stroke Me

Talk To Me

Project Rub™

Poke Spiky Balls For Me

Vomit Goldfish For Me

Make Cats Squeal For Me

Welcome to SEGA's utterly weird world of Project Rub, the insanely addictive game where you'll have to flick, blow, poke, stroke and rub your way into your girl's affections. With 30 increasingly bizarre love matches, from poking balls to vomiting goldfish, you'll have to use the power of touch, voice and even your breath to bring the game to its climax.

Fall weirdly, wonderfully in Rub Love

Developed exclusively for the Nintendo DS. A game to really show off your hardware.



TOUCH ME! DS

CREATED BY SONIC TEAM

SEGA


15 PACKED PAGES OF DS & GBA!
NGC POCKET
FOR HANDHELD GAMERS
IN NGC POCKET THIS MONTH...
WARIO WARE TOUCHED
Reviewed! The best game on Nintendo DS... P.36
YOSHI'S TOUCH & GO
Amazing – like nothing you've played before P.44
IT'S HERE
All 14 Nintendo DS UK launch titles reviewed and rated inside
PLUS!
The first DS Pokémon game
Make your own Picto-animations
Darned useful DS FAQ
Win a superb brass battle stylus

NGC POCKET

NEWS • NEWS • NEWS • NEWS

IT'S HERE!



All your problems solved, all your questions answered…

Over the past few months we've had loads of questions about the DS, so we thought, now that's it's actually available, we'd collect them all up for a gigantic DS FAQ. Hopefully, we'll have covered pretty much all the important information in here – as well as some of the less important questions…



HOW DURABLE IS THE TOUCH SCREEN?

Very. We haven't got a single scratch on any of our screens so far, and we've been playing with our DS's pretty much every day since we got them. The only thing we have noticed is that the screen can get very greasy very quickly but it's nothing that can't be solved with a quick wipe. The screen *will* warp if you apply too much pressure on it – and by 'too much pressure', we mean putting all your body weight behind the stylus and trying to force the nib through the unit itself. In other words, if you're *trying* to break the screen it's possible with enough effort, if you use it like a normal, sensible human being, then you'll have no problems.

CAN I PLAY MULTI-PLAYER GBA GAMES ACROSS DS?

No you can't. You can play GBA games in single-player only.

HOW LONG DOES THE BATTERY LAST?

We reckon you can get at least a good 8-9 hours continuous play off a full charge…

CAN I USE MY GBA SP CHARGER WITH MY DS?

Yes you can. They're essentially the same and in the four months we've had our import machines, we've been using our SP chargers with no problems/explosions/ electrocutions.

CAN I LINK MY DS TO MY GAMECUBE TO PLAY GAMES LIKE FOUR SWORDS?

No, unfortunately not.

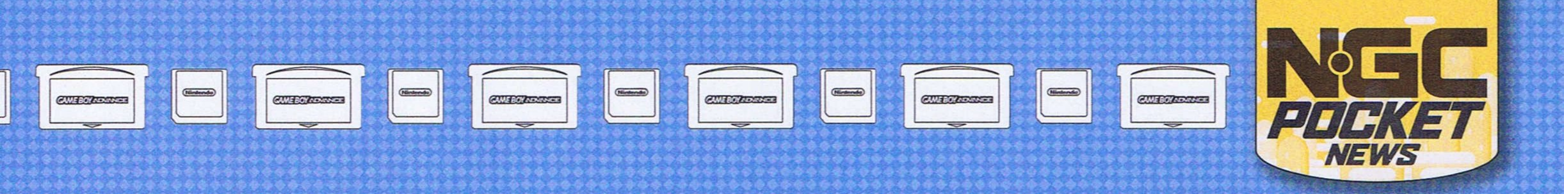
CAN I PLAY GBC GAMES ON IT?

No. We tried playing *Toki Tori* and *Pokemon Red* in a DS and couldn't even fit the cart in the hole.

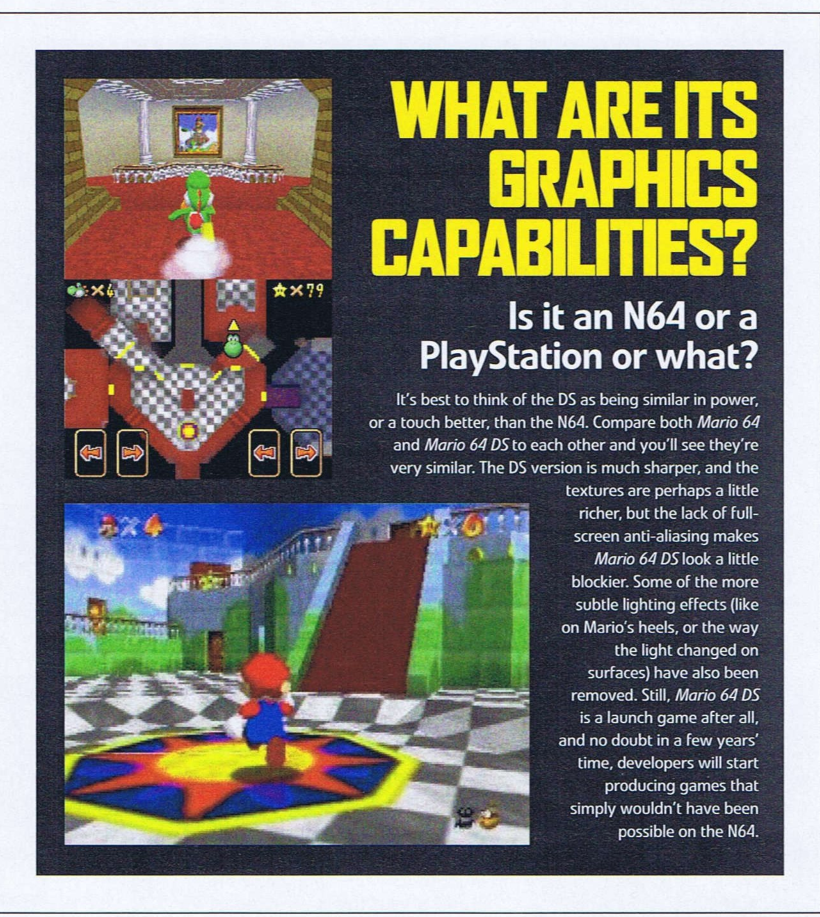
WHAT ABOUT IMPORT GAMES? WILL THEY WORK ON MY UK DS?

Yup, just like the GBA, the DS is region-free, which means that whether you buy your games in the UK, US or Japan, you will be able to play them on your machine. Very handy if you find you can't wait the extra couple of months for a specific game to be released over here. Bear in mind, though, that import prices tend to be a little steeper, coming in at around £35-40 on average.

> "JUST LIKE THE GBA, THE DS IS REGION-FREE, SO YOU CAN PLAY ANY IMPORT GAMES"



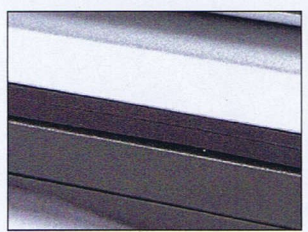




WHAT ARE ITS GRAPHICS CAPABILITIES?

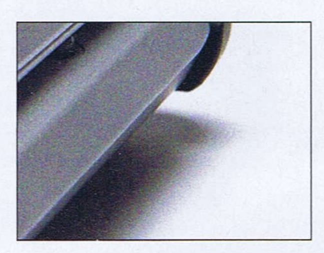
Is it an N64 or a PlayStation or what?

It's best to think of the DS as being similar in power, or a touch better, than the N64. Compare both *Mario 64* and *Mario 64 DS* to each other and you'll see they're very similar. The DS version is much sharper, and the textures are perhaps a little richer, but the lack of full-screen anti-aliasing makes *Mario 64 DS* look a little blockier. Some of the more subtle lighting effects (like on Mario's heels, or the way the light changed on surfaces) have also been removed. Still, *Mario 64 DS* is a launch game after all, and no doubt in a few years' time, developers will start producing games that simply wouldn't have been possible on the N64.









IS DS ONLINE? WILL IT BE ON LINE? CAN IT GO ONLINE?

The simple answer to the first one is no – not yet. Any kind of multi-player action has to be conducted with other DS users within a 100ft radius of your machine. Still, the DS's networking capabilities means that, theoretically speaking, online play is possible. A number of enthusiastic DS owners are already working on the problem and Miyamoto himself has often hinted at the possibility. So, honestly speaking, it's only a matter of time before someone comes up with some sort of online service for the DS. The only downside is that, when that time comes, you'll have to invest in a wireless router or gateway to be able to play online.

IS THERE ANY SOFTWARE/ HARDWARE TO TURN THE DS INTO A MEDIA PLAYER?

There's nothing official specifically for the DS, but Nintendo has recently released a device called *Play-Yan*, an MP3 and MPEG4 music and video player. It's basically a little cartridge with a headphone socket that you can plug into your GBA SP or DS. At the moment, there's been no official word as to whether it'll come out over here, but a recent Nintendo patent and trademark filing for something called 'V-Pocket' suggest that it just might. Well, if the 'V' stands for video…





△ **The *Play-Yan* gizmo. Use your PC to put music, movies or really crappy home-brew games on an SD memory card, then play them on your GBA.**

ANY NEW DS COLOURS IN THE PIPELINE? I WANT A PINK ONE.

There's a black version and a white version available in Japan right now, with a handbag-friendly turquoise edition and







WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE MACHINE'S WIRELESS DOO-DAH?

Your DS is scouring the airwaves for new content

Aside from standard multiplayer, the great big hope is for an online service – in whatever shape it may come – but that's still some way off yet. Nintendo have already revealed their intention to provide downloadable content though. For example, during the next Pokémon movie, cinema-goers will be able to download new monsters and items while watching the film. Likewise, Nintendo will set up special stations in stores, from which DS owners can download demos of forthcoming games. There's no reason why a similar service won't appear over here. Eventually.

WHAT'S ALL THIS I HEAR ABOUT DEAD PIXELS?

Mongering the old scare…

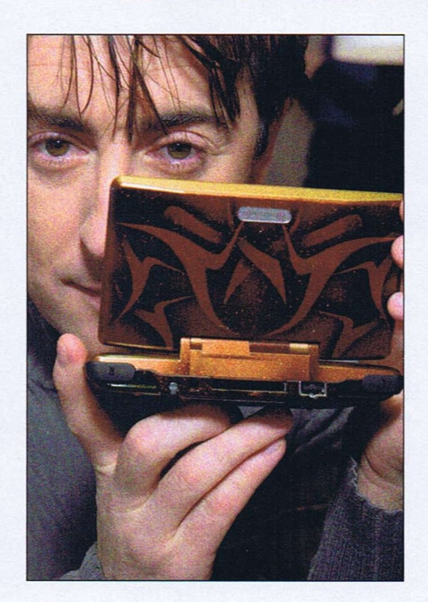
It can be a problem, yes, but it's not a DS-specific one. Any kind of hardware that uses LCD screens, whether a mobile phone, PDA or handheld, is prone to the problem, where one or more of the pixels on the screen seems to be 'stuck' on a particular colour, or simply doesn't light up at all. It's by no means devastating (dead pixels are barely noticeable when there's plenty of action on screen) but it can be very irritating all the same. In the unlikely event you have a faulty DS, you'll need to phone Nintendo's customer service number on 08706 060 247 and they'll ask you to send your unit off for repair at the following address:



NINTENDO SERVICE CENTRE
Codestorm House
Walton Rd
Farlington
Hampshire
PO6 1TR

If Nintendo can't repair your unit they'll have it replaced immediately. Lastly – it's very important that you **PHONE NINTENDO FIRST** before you send your unit off for repair.







(yes!) a baby pink one available in April. The Japanese market always gets the widest selection of colours, but we're bound to see a few launched over here in due course. While we're on the subject, Nintendo did make a few custom designs for the DS, all three of which were sold off at a charity auction held at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah in the US in January. The picture above shows Boris from GoldenEye (aka actor Alan Cumming) with his personalised design. The price was a bit steep, though, with one unit selling for $10,000. Give any halfway talented artist a bare DS shell, an airbrush and a pot of lacquer, and you could have something similar for far less dosh. Other than that, there's a Pepsi and Nintendo promotion in Japan, where lucky Pepsi Twist drinkers get the chance to win one of 1,000 lovely looking blue DS's. So the likelihood of different coloured units in the future is pretty high…

WHAT LAUNCH GAMES SHOULD I BUY?

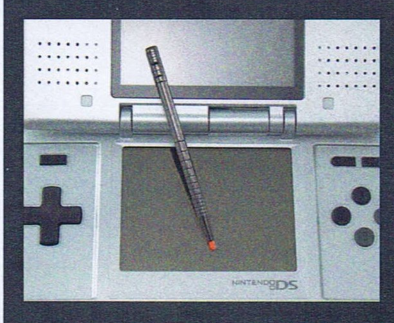
Have a look at the launch line-up reviewed this issue to see what takes your fancy. We'd say *Wario Ware* is the most essential purchase – so *definitely* buy that at launch. After that we'd suggest *Mario 64 DS* followed buy something like *Project Rub* and maybe *Zoo Keeper* or *Polarium* for a quick-fire puzzle fix.

WHAT IS THERE IN THE WAY OF OFFICIAL PERIPHERALS?

At the time of writing Nintendo of have yet to confirm exactly what they are going to be releasing at launch. We know that spare packs of three styluses will be available in early May, so those of you clumsy enough to lose the two you get free with the machine will have to wait for an official replacement. Also set for release is an AC adapter, replacement battery and cover, game card case and a replacement top screen cover, should you damage the original one. If you can't wait for the official Nintendo peripherals, Game and 4Gamers currently have peripherals available or, alternatively, have a look at Lik-Sang.com for a complete list of their reasonably priced official peripherals, which include some nice headphones and all manner of sexy carry cases…

WHAT IF I LOSE MY STYLUS?

The ultimate DS accessory…



Well seeing as the official stylus pack won't be out until May, we'd suggest looking online for a replacement. While you wait, you may like to use a cotton bud (apparently that's what Mr Miyamoto) likes to use. Or there's always…

THE SUPER STYLUS!!!

A bit of an extravagance this. It's PDA Panache's 'Battle Stylus' a 'Pro Stylus Upgrade for your Nintendo DS'. Basically, it's a solid brass stylus with a gunmetal finish and an 'Easy View™' neon tip and is designed to fit into the back of your DS.

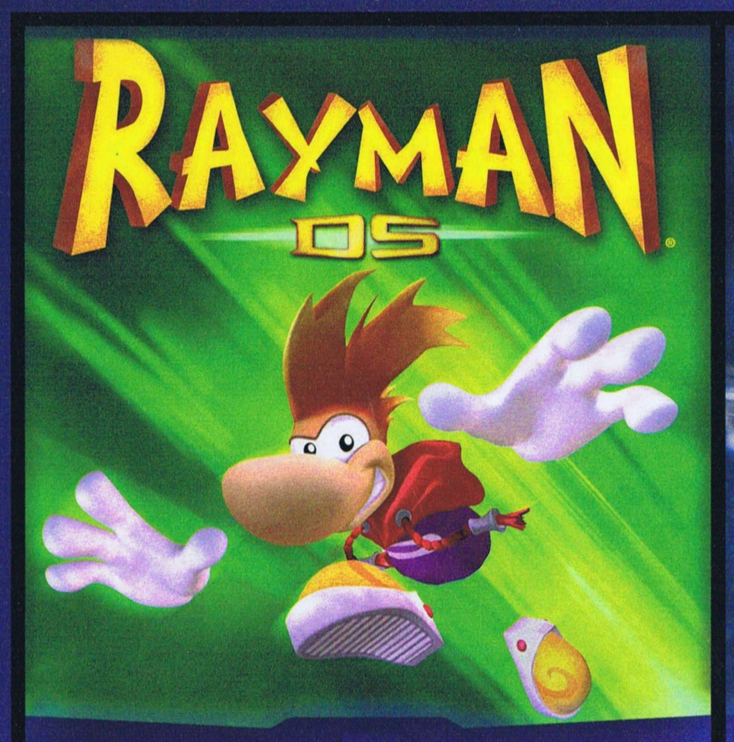
Now, we're normally pretty sceptical when it comes to things like this, but we have to admit it's very, very nice indeed. It has a satisfying weight, clicks pleasingly into the back of your DS and, oddly enough, once you've used one, you won't want to touch the lightweight plastic efforts again. Only problem is, after a shipping from the US, one of these babies will set you back around $19. More than ten quid! If you want to know more, have a look at www.pdapanache.com for more details…



Alternatively, you can win one of five that we have in the office by answering this question:

If you smelted Copper ore that contained Zinc you would end up with… ?

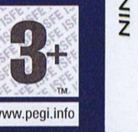
Answers to 'I'm all about the brass' at ngc@futurenet.co.uk

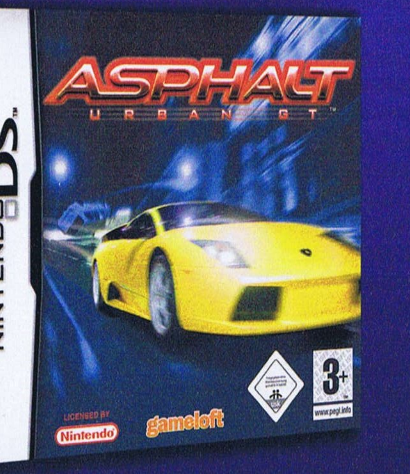

RAYMAN
DS

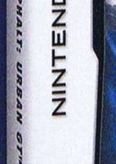
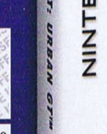
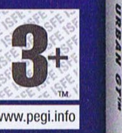


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CASTLEVANIA DS

From: KONAMI

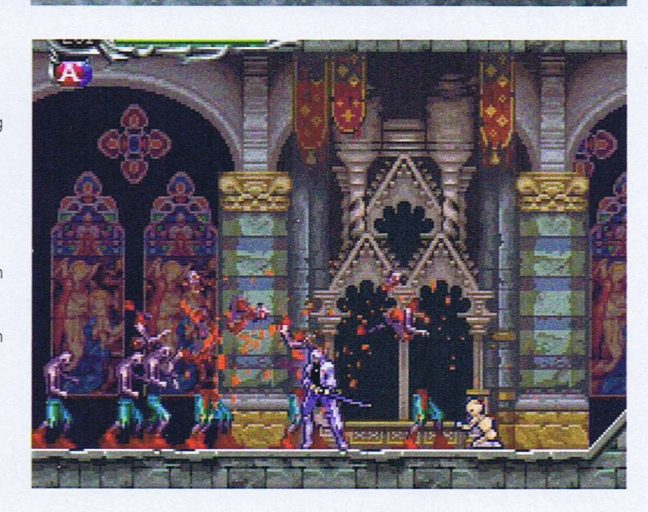
There's a distinct lack of quality, traditional side-scrolling action games on DS at the moment. *Spider-Man 2* (reviewed this issue) doesn't really cut it to be honest, *Metroid Hunters* is going down the FPS route and so it's left to *Castlevania* to deliver.

First impressions aren't the best, unfortunately. Looking at the game in screenshots, you could be forgiven for thinking it looks a little too much like the GBA games. See the game in motion though and things are a little more reassuring – at least in so far as you appreciate that what's on offer couldn't have been done on GBA. The game uses far more in the way sprite-scaling effects than previous titles for example, especially for the bosses and mini-bosses, which are much larger, more detailed and boast some lovely animation. The same goes for the artwork on each level – with much more in the way of detail such as weather effects.

The touch screen also seems to have been implemented successfully. The most interesting use we've seen so far is with blocks that need to be stabbed on the screen to break them. This can be done to simply clear the path ahead or, in some instances, can be cleared in such away that you can use them as platforms to reach higher ground.

The touch screen also comes into play when delivering more powerful attacks. On occasion you'll be required to draw special symbols on the touch screen to finish off bosses or unleash the game's more powerful spells.

From what little we've played so far – it's shaping up rather well and we're confident that, barring some kind of catastrophe, all will be well when it's released this autumn. So rest easy – hopefully this should be a decent platformer that makes good use of the DS.



LOST IN BLUE

From: KONAMI

It's the new name for the sequel to the GBC's *Survival Kids*. which, despite its undoubted quality, no one ever seemed to buy, so it's great to see it making a comeback.

In *Lost in Blue*, you're shipwrecked on a desert island and have to survive and make it home. The game is an adventure in a 3D game world. You have to find and collect raw materials to turn into useful tools, hunt animals, fish for food and learn how to make fire. There are two characters to look after, a boy and a girl – and there's a rather sweet *Resi 4*/ *Ico* style dual-character system where you have to look after and help each other and use each character to overcome various puzzles and situations.

The game also makes good use of the DS's unique features. We particularly like the look of the fire-starting task in particular, where you have to rub the touch screen to get some wisps of smoke going and then, cleverly, have to blow into the DS to get the fire started. The hunting and fishing bits also happen in first person and again, the touch screen is used here for tasks like casting and reeling in your catch.

Obviously it's too early to tell exactly what we can expect from this quality-wise, but it certainly looks like one of the more interesting DS games and so we'll be following its progress closely over the next few months.



△ One boy, one girl, one deserted island… All we need is for Brooke Shields to do the voice-over and our wildest dreams will be fulfilled.

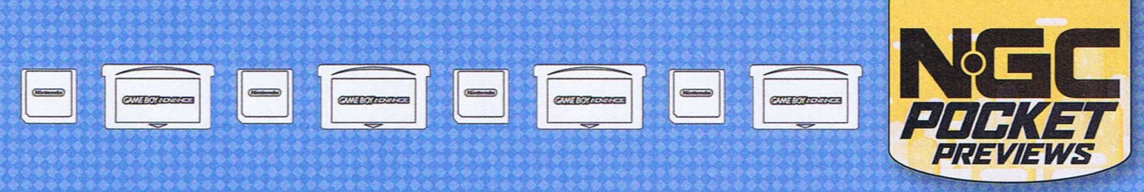


△ Whoah! We've caught a school of scuba-diving holidaymakers.





△ How do we climb this tall step?



ANOTHER CODE

From: NINTENDO

It's an adventure game from Nintendo with the emphasis on investigation and puzzle solving, rather than a test of your reflexes. You assume the role of a young lady who travels to an island to find her father who, rumour has it, has run into some very serious trouble.

The game's look is quite unique. The bottom screen displays an overhead view of your character and her surroundings. You can navigate the gameworld using the touch screen by holding your stylus on a certain area of the environment, prompting you character to run there. The top screen offers a more detailed view of what's around you – static screens showing what your character can see from where they are.

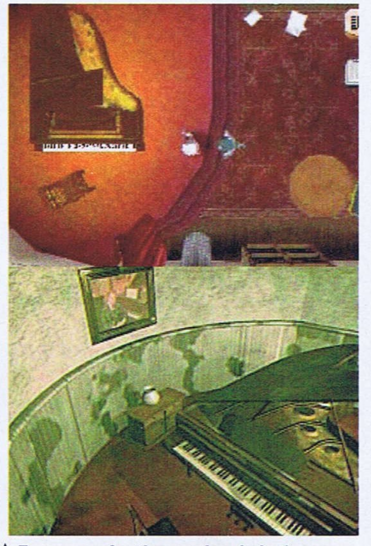
You can interact with objects in the game by simply tapping them on the screen to bring up and options menu. If you can manipulate an object you'll get a view of it on the bottom screen, whereupon you can use the touch screen to play with it, rotate it, piece it together – whatever the puzzle requires you to do. In a way, it kind of reminds us of the PC's old point-and-click classics like *Broken Sword* or, dare we say it, *Myst*. It's an interesting idea for sure, and hopefully it'll work well on the DS.



△ **This looks really stylish, with great use of both screens for different perspectives.**



△ **That says Ashley in Japanese. Obviously a popular name for girlie game stars.**



△ **Top screen for the overhead playing area, bottom screen for a rendered close-up.**

METEOS

From: BANDAI

We've mentioned this before, but never in any real detail. It's perhaps most notable for the fact it's the brainchild of two of Japan's most respected developers, Tetsuya Mizuguchi (of *Space Channel 5* and *Rez* fame) and Masahiro Sakurai of Nintendo's HAL Laboratories – responsible for (among other things) *Kirby* and *Smash Bros.*

Meteos itself is a puzzle game, albeit a more action-based one. The concept revolves around matching coloured blocks in horizontal rows of three or more. This you do by shifting the falling coloured blocks vertically. Once you've matched a set of colours, any blocks above them will be launched into space. However, there are more subtle elements here – launch too big a stack and it may be too heavy to reach escape velocity and so smaller launches need to be activated to facilitate it's launch upwards. Sounds odd, yes, but we genuinely believe this will be one of this year's better DS games…







PAC - MIX

From: NAMCO

Of the original batch of E3 2004 tech demos, this was perhaps the most intriguing. The touch screen displayed increasing numbers of *Pac-Man* style ghosts that needed to be dispatched. However, players had to draw a Pac-Man with the stylus, whereupon he would animate himself and start chomping around the screen. In order to guide him to the ghosts, players had to draw lines in front of him; in the direction they wanted him to go. Once all the ghosts have been chomped, players progress to the next stage.

Since then, the concept has remained the same, except the game has been treated to some visual refinements, had a 'story' of sorts chucked over the top and, perhaps most intriguingly, there are some boss encounters. This is easily one of the more interesting games on the horizon, and one that could prove as pleasingly tactile as Nintendo's own *Wario Ware*.









HARVEST MOON

From: NATSUMI



We can't help but feel slight pangs of disappointment every time we see this. A part of us wanted to see something a little chunkier looking, more like the US N64 game and less like the GBA version to which this DS game looks depressingly similar. Still, there's some nice use of the dual screen feature going on, with all your menus and trash like that on the bottom screen for ease of access, while the top screen takes care of all the action. The bottom screen is also used for showing the game's characters during conversation as well as being the main interface for any interaction with the game's animals. Horses need grooming, cows need milking and pigs can be interfered with (okay maybe not the last one) all using the touch screen. It's like one big, dirty animal love in…



ADVANCE WARS DS

From: NINTENDO



If you've played the GBA versions, you don't need us to tell you how brilliant this will be. For the uninitiated, it's a DS sequel to what must be the finest, most addictive turn-based strategy game available. From what we've seen so far it's very much a case of more of the same (which is no bad thing at all) except with some smart changes. First, the touch screen control will help things feel slicker and more intuitive, while the top screen, interestingly, displays movements of airborne units, with the bottom screen being reserved for ground-based battles.





SUPER PRINCESS PEACH

From: NINTENDO



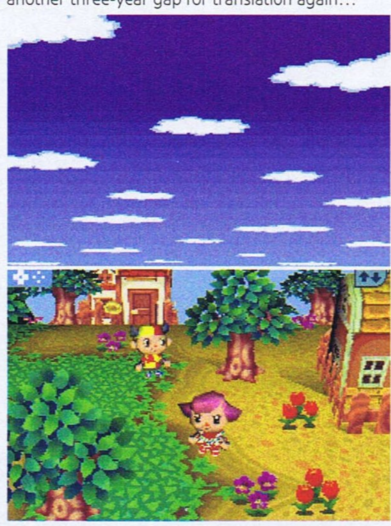
After the original announcement of this a little while back, things have been pretty quiet. Quiet in so far as we've yet to actually get our hands on it. Not that we're that fussed mind you. Despite it being a nice idea to have a Peach-specific game, we have to admit we're a little under whelmed. It's basically a 2D side scrolling platformer where you have to go and save Mario (can you see what they did there?). Helping her on her quest is a magic umbrella that, get this, allows you to float…



ANIMAL CROSSING DS

From: NINTENDO

A portable *Animal Crossing*. Complete with revamped, seamless, 3D-scrolly visuals and the prospect of having multiple, human-controlled characters in the same town. Where do we sign up? Seriously, we can think of nothing better than having a *Crossing* that we can dip in and out of whenever we want, without having to boot up a Gamecube in our homes. We hope you're patient though, because this is going to be some way off yet and god forbid we should have to endure another three-year gap for translation again…



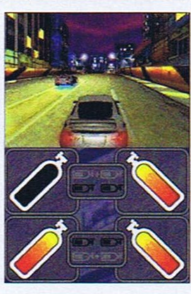
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2: DS

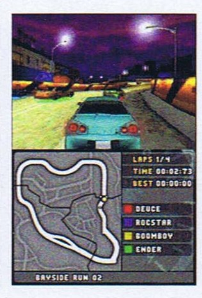
From: EA

In light of the appalling *Asphalt: Urban GT* and the crippled control scheme of *Ridge Racer DS*, we find ourselves in the unusual position of actually looking forward to this. Almost.

Don't expect as large a city to explore as in the Gamecube version though, but rest assured the extensive customisation will remain. Perhaps the most notable feature is the ability to paint your own decals for the vehicles in your garage, which seems to be the game's most inventive use of the touch screen. All that remains now is whether or not EA can actually deliver a decent sense of speed and, crucially, a control scheme that doesn't make the game handle like a pig.





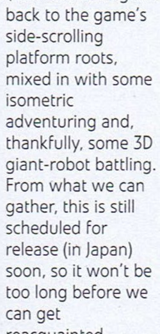


GANBARE GOEMON

From: KONAMI

Konami's little ninja doesn't get out much these days. After releases on the SNES and N64 he slipped off the radar, which makes the prospect of an all-new DS adventure rather exciting. Rather than rehashing the N64 version, Konami have gone back to the game's side-scrolling platform roots, mixed in with some isometric adventuring and, thankfully, some 3D giant-robot battling. From what we can gather, this is still scheduled for release (in Japan) soon, so it won't be too long before we can get reacquainted.







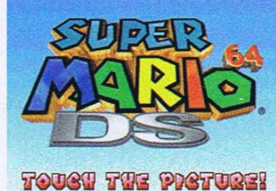

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DOFF YOUR CAP

While each of the four playable characters has their own special abilities, there are times when you'll need a specific character to progress, for example, there might be a brick to smash that only Wario can smash. Each level has caps hidden in it (usually being worn by an enemy), allowing you to transform into Mario and enter character-specific challenges, such as the Koopa The Quick race in Bob-Omb battlefield. Rockin'.



△ Four-player battling. Well, it isn't the most amazing thing ever but since you're not paying any extra to have it, it's a nice little bonus.



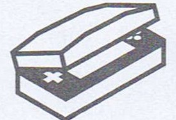
SUPER MARIO 64 DS



△ Wario spots a Goomba wearing Mario's cap. How quaint.

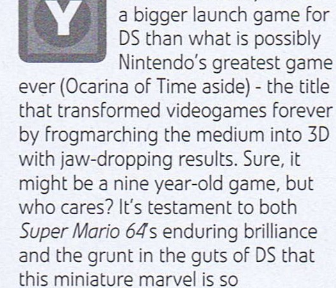


△ Yoshi heads for the same level Wario is in, above. Oh yes.



FROM: NINTENDO | **PLAYERS:** 1-4 | **SINGLE CART LINK** NO
MICROPHONE: NO | **OUT:** NOW | **COST:** £30

The Greatest Platfomer Ever – but smaller...



You couldn't really ask for a bigger launch game for DS than what is possibly Nintendo's greatest game ever (Ocarina of Time aside) - the title that transformed videogames forever by frogmarching the medium into 3D with jaw-dropping results. Sure, it might be a nine year-old game, but who cares? It's testament to both *Super Mario 64*'s enduring brilliance and the grunt in the guts of DS that this miniature marvel is so spectacularly good.

You know the drill; the idea is to collect stars by indulging in all manner of 3D platformery through a variety of disparate worlds, unlocked from and entered through a castle-shaped hub. It's the same as it ever was, but Nintendo have expanded their masterwork and added loads of new bits. That means new areas, new challenges and, superbly, a hefty pile of mini-games that make full use of the DS's touch screen. Even if you saw everything that *Mario 64* had to offer it's well worth shelling out for this – not least because it also gives you three extra characters to play as, (Yoshi, Wario and Luigi) as well as a riotous snatch-the-star multiplayer mode that provides a stunning introductory flourish for DS's wireless abilities. It's simple, that's for sure and seems more of an afterthought than the starring role it played as last year's E3 would otherwise suggest, but it's a hoot nonetheless, as you all scrabble to grab stars, butt-stomping, flying using the wing cap and generally having a laugh. And you only need one copy of the game to do so, too. Superb.

> "ULTIMATELY, SUPER MARIO 64 DS IS AN ESSENTIAL PURCHASE IF YOU'RE GETTING A DS"

It's not all great though, because as you probably know by now, the touch-screen control isn't really a



NGC POCKET 5 STAR SCORING EXPLAINED





5 – Beyond shadow of a doubt, an essential purchase
4 – Definitely recommended.
3 – Okay, but not a disaster if you miss out.
2 – Disappointing and a waste of good money.
1 – The gaming equivalent of a venereal disease.



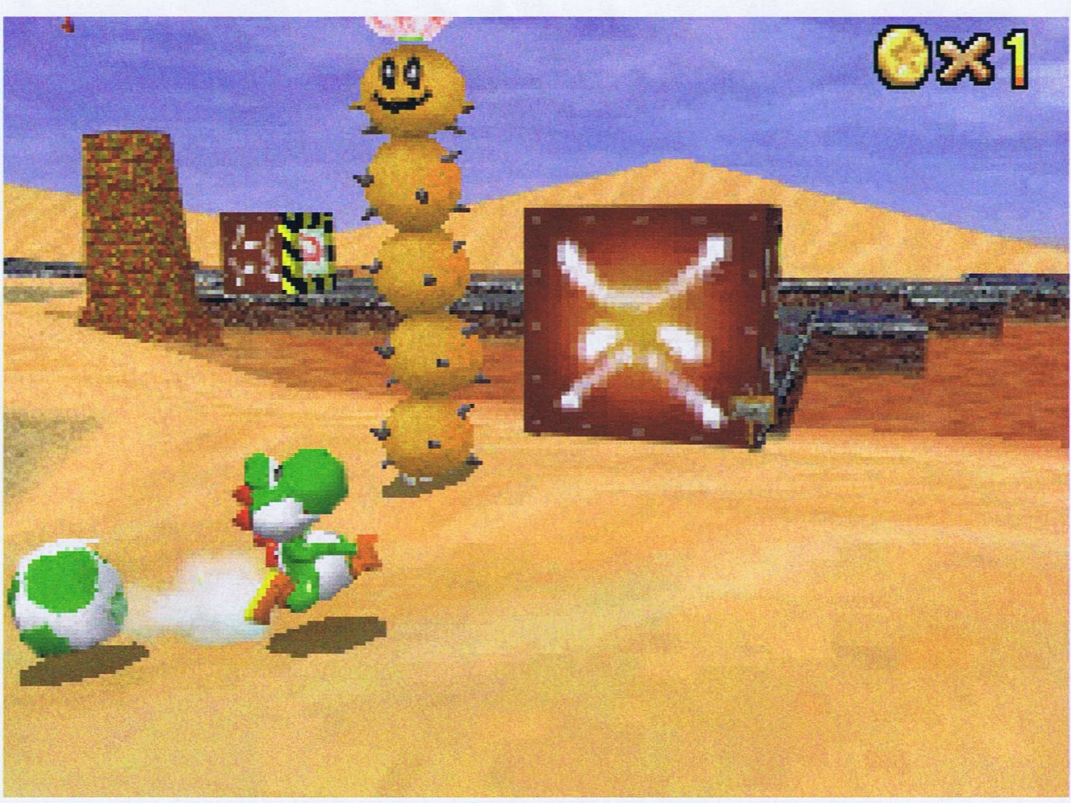
△ You can no longer jump through this guy's smaller minions.



△ Chucking Bowser into the right part of the screen is pretty hard.



△ The all-new balloon technique, for floating over tricky bits.



△ Ahh, the music on this desert level takes us right back to 1997. So does the rest of the game, of course.



△ Wario recovers the cap. Thank goodness for that!

satisfactory replacement for the analogue stick the game was designed for. Taken in isolation, it's actually brilliant. With the stylus or the thumb-pad actually replicating analogue movement and allowing for all sorts of subtlety – but having to drag your stylus across the screen and then re-centre it can make things fiddly. Pulling off certain moves (backflips in particular) can be hatefully difficult. With practice, the thumb pad is probably the best option. Although, if you have a flat surface to lay your DS on, the stylus is just as good. To summarise, it's no replacement for the N64 pad's analogue stick, but it demonstrates that DS's touch pad is way more than a gimmick – and it's also useful for other small-but-great touches, such as a map, handily showing you the locations of stars and coins, and camera-twiddling icons. As such, it's a pointer to a bright future as well as a fine first outing for the USP of Ninty's new handheld.

Ultimately, *Super Mario 64 DS* is an essential purchase if you're going to splash the cash on a DS. It's got enough new bits to entice Mario veterans into the fold and if you somehow missed out on history in the making and never played Mario's 64-bit outing, you'll find a primary-coloured world that is breathtaking in almost every conceivable way.

JES BICKHAM





△ No, Yoshi! Don't do it!

△ A trifling bonus for your amusement (but not for long).



△ Nine-Volt plays on his mixing desk, while big brother 18-Volt looks on and admires those lovely Mario and Luigi toys.

WARIO WARE TOUCHED

FROM: NINTENDO	**PLAYERS:** 1-2	**SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: YES	**OUT:** NOW	**COST:** £30

The essential DS purchase

Still not entirely convinced by DS? Ten minutes with this latest and most imaginative *Wario Ware* ought to be enough to persuade anybody that touchable screens and blowable microphones make the most intuitive gaming control system ever devised.

Although the rapid-fire format will be immediately familiar to most GBA owners, this is the only game series in which each sequel offers something totally original. Remarkably, *Touched* is even more impressive than the magnificent, motion-sensing *Mawaru*.

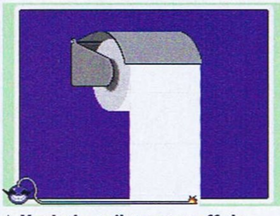
It's a collection of almost 200 Nintendo vignettes, most of them insubstantial enough to be flattered by their mini-game billing. Individually they're amusing ways to explore the possibilities offered by DS, much like the technical demos first shown at last year's E3. Together they're a firework display of Nintendo magic.

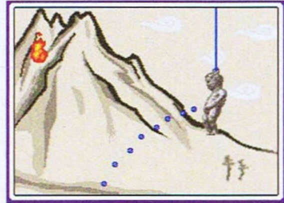
Minigames are thrown onto the screen at five-second intervals, allowing just enough time to figure out what you're supposed to be doing before the next game arrives. There's rarely anything more complicated than colouring a picture, drawing a line, activating a machine or blowing into the mic hole, but when the time limit gets tighter and you've no idea which game is going to pop up next, you'll soon start making mistakes.

The games are divided into groups according to the type of action required - blowing, tapping, swiping, circling, pulling... When you've beaten a certain score in the current game set, a new one is

> **"THIS IS THE WARIO WARE WE'D GO FOR IF WE COULD ONLY HAVE ONE OF THEM (GOD FORBID)"**




Δ Yank the toilet paper off the roll as quickly as possible.


Δ Swing the hanging boy so he wees on the fire. Easy does it.


Δ There are plenty of retro references throughout the game.



Δ Tap the creatures and make Koopa shells bounce around the screen.


Δ Can you score past one defender? Past two? Past three? Oh, okay.

unlocked, including compilation sets that provide a genuine challenge, given the diversity of the actions you have to perform and the ever-decreasing time limit.

Wario Ware records your high scores for each game set, as well as individual records for the mini-games. As in previous instalments in the series, you can attempt the epic task of hitting every score target to win gold crowns and a special reward.

On top of the challenge of setting new records, there's plenty of long-term appeal to be had from unlocking the many bonus toys that are available. There are more than 30 little extras to locate, including such delights as a playable harmonica, a handy kitchen timer, a metronome and a brilliant 360° version of the Pyoro shoot-'em-up that graces all the previous Wario Wares. Finding all this should keep you occupied…

Despite being somewhat less expansive than the vast *Mawaru*, with its seemingly endless array of toys and surprises, and featuring a couple of slightly confusing mini-games, this is the *Wario Ware* we'd go for if we could only have one of them. God forbid. Shame there's no multiplayer support beyond the odd toy that lets two people share one machine, but given the quality of what's been packed into this, by far the best thing on Nintendo DS, it would be rude to complain.

MARTIN KITTS





PLAY MORE

One of the many great things about Wario Ware Touched *is the way almost everything is interactive. From the title screen, where you can throw objects at the game's logo, to a menu page made up of characters who wander around until you hit them in the face to start a game, there's always something to play with. Try messing around with the letters in the credits, or the cartoon cutscenes, or continue playing after a game has 'ended'…*

▵ Ray versus the dapper French robot with a strong disliking of rabbits.

RAYMAN DS



FROM: UBISOFT	**PLAYERS:** 1	**SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: NO	**OUT:** NOW	**COST:** £30

No arms! No legs! See the hideous freak prance for your pleasure!



▵ Note the virtual analogue stick on the lower screen. Magic, isn't it?



▵ Some of this game is so hard, it'll make you cry acid tears.



We've never been enormous fans of *Rayman* here at NGC, despite his admirable commercial success. For, while it may be debateable as to how loveable a fat little plumber can be, Ubisoft's flagship character has always been an odious and loathsome creation. Sorry, we just don't like him.

Which isn't to say that the games he's starred in are bad, not at all. As far as third-party platformers are concerned, ugly old Rayman's got it all sewn up. But he's still always lagged far behind Mario, and this initial DS outing for the French fancy only highlights just how far ahead of the competition *Super Mario 64* still is, all these years later. If you wanted to buy a 3D platformer for your DS, there's absolutely no reason to buy this over *SM64 DS*.

Rayman DS is, like *SM64 DS*, a port of an N64 game, but whereas *SM64 DS* offered loads of new bits and a control system that makes perfect sense in isolation but is problematic when compared to the original, this is simply the same as before, but crucially worse. *Rayman 2: The Great Escape* wasn't a bad old game, when we first reviewed it six years ago, but unlike Mario's first 3D effort, this has aged badly and been clumsily adapted for DS.

> **"LET'S HOPE THE NEXT RAYMAN IS MORE SUCCESSFUL"**

Rayman 2 was always all about action - being pushed to the next hectic set-piece, rather than exploring and experimenting. As such, while there's plenty of breathless bits to enjoy, there's also a load of hatefully and unmercifully difficult exercises, such as the infamous section where you've got to use your magic fist to swing from airborne rings while the platforms beneath you crumble and fall. This kind of thing was rubbish in the first place, but is now additionally hampered by crappy controls.

The touch-screen is only used for an alternative control method that is quite simply unsatisfactory, twitchy and eccentric. Rather than using the whole screen, an on-screen D-pad is used, which somewhat negates the problem of having to re-centre your thumb, but it all feels erratic. The result is a game where control is a hindrance and the initial excitement at seeing a proper 3D platformer on a handheld is soon forgotten in light of this. Let's hope the next *Rayman* is more successful.

JES BICKHAM







POKÉMON DASH



FROM: NINTENDO **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES **COST:** £30



You couldn't exactly mark this one down on your launch list as essential – but that's not to say it's not any good. It's just a little on the… odd side.

It's basically a racing game… kind of. Racing combined with orienteering (if you can imagine such a thing) where you have to guide Pikachu from checkpoint to checkpoint by rubbing the stylus frantically over the yellow mouse's back. The faster you rub the faster he runs – which proves as much a test of your forearms' stamina as it does your sense of direction. Underneath this basic concept runs a rather clever little dynamic. You see each of the game's courses has a number of different terrain types. Water, snow, sand, dirt, forest or grassland all slow your progress should you attempt to run over them – a fact that can be remedied by running over power-ups to maintain your speed.

There is, however, a different mode of transport available – but this throws up its own set of dilemmas. You can send Pikachu up in a balloon to help him traverse more ground faster while getting a better view of his surroundings – the problem is, he can only hold one set of balloons at a time, and while he can see the entire map (a view unavailable to him at ground level) he can't see the power-ups necessary to help plan his overall course, so it's a double-edged sword, of sorts.







△ **This game is absolutely exhausting. We're suing Nintendo for RSI. Yep.**

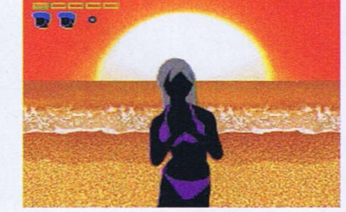
It's a quirky little dynamic that, for the first few hours of play, proves to be lots of fun. Unfortunately from course to course, the experience proves pretty repetitive and, ultimately, not particularly rewarding for the effort you put in. A nice idea then, but hardly essential playing…

GERAINT EVANS

DUAL ★★★☆☆
TOUCH ★★★★☆











PROJECT RUB



FROM: NINTENDO **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES **COST:** £30

This is one of the more inventive DS games – but it's been somewhat overshadowed by the simultaneous European launch of *Wario Ware*. The basic structure of the game is very similar. It's a collection of mini-games that require various uses of the DS's unique features. The game can be controlled almost entirely with the stylus and touch screen – with the only exceptions being games where you use the handheld's microphone.

Wrapping up all these minigames is a simple love story, where you have to win a girl's affection by impressing her through daring stunts – tasks that are universally bizarre in their requirements. Shunt fish and turtles out of a stomach. Blow a sailboat to the drowning girl in shark infested waters. Stab at a procession of rampaging bulls or tap numbers into a keypad so that skydivers can open their chutes.

It's clear that developers Sonic Team have put a great deal of thought and effort into how best to milk the DS's abilities and the results are truly refreshing – at least in so far as you'll be engaging in some truly unique experiences, and the game's overall presentation is certainly aesthetically pleasing.

However, there are problems. The length of the mini-games can often feel a touch tiresome (especially after playing through the quick-fire barrage of games on offer) and the rather lazy repetition of bosses in the later stages is more than a little disappointing. We'd still urge you to give it a try though – it is one of the better launch games after all…



GERAINT EVANS

DUAL ★★★★☆
TOUCH ★★★★★



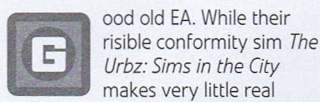




TIGER WOODS



FROM: EA **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES **COST:** £25



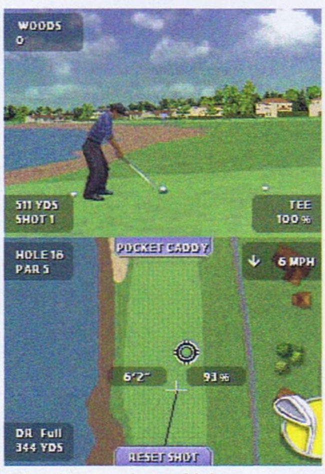
Good old EA. While their risible conformity sim *The Urbz: Sims in the City* makes very little real effort to do anything of note with DS's unique capabilities, they've pulled one out of the sack for *Tiger Woods PGA Tour '05*, thus proving that Ninty's plucky handheld needn't be a dumping ground for third-party tat that could quite easily be done on the GBA, but can be put to good use if developer's put the time in.

The reason *Tiger Woods* works is because it uses the touch screen to provide a superb control system. Rub the stylus over a power meter to increase the strength of your shot, then swipe it over a U-shaped swing icon to actually hit the ball. The faster you do it the better, although of course this may hamper accuracy (dictated by where you finish your swing). It's simple but brilliantly effective and makes this portable Tiger as rewarding to play as other versions on bigger consoles, Gamecube included.

Other touchscreen utilities are modest, however, allowing you to check out a given golf course by using the stylus to zoom around it. Nonetheless, if you're a golfing fan this is cracking – and, much like its Gamecube equivalent, there's huge scope for customising your golfer even if, due to DS's slightly blocky graphics, they often look like misshapen monster-men.

So if you're – heaven forbid – weary of leaping around Mushroom Kingdom, or your brain is frazzled from too many quickfire *Wario Ware* mini-games, this might be just the soothing antidote you're after. Unless, of course, you hate golf, in which case you're better off with something you'll enjoy. Obviously.

JES BICKHAM



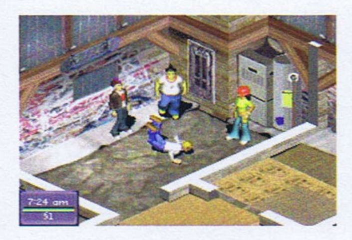
△ **Hey, it's a pocket caddy!**

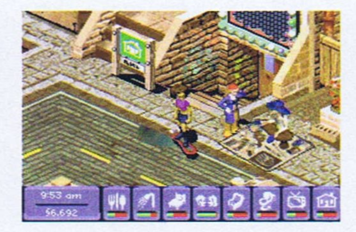


△ **Buying yourself some skills. I'll have the laser eyes and invisibility.**

DUAL ★★★☆☆
TOUCH ★★★☆☆







THE URBZ
SIMS IN THE CITY



FROM: EA **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £25



Got the GBA version of *The Urbz*? Then if you buy this, you'll be essentially paying twice for the same game, which is nobody's idea of A Good Thing, unless you're an idiot. And we know NGC readers aren't idiots (never believe anyone that says that flattery doesn't get you a long way).

So, yep, it's the same game, but with a couple of additions – a new 'island', some virtual pets, and a half-arsed collection of touch-screen based mini-games. Better than nothing, admittedly, but hardly enough to make this a tempting prospect over the (cheaper) GBA version.

Touch screen functionality is, those mini-games aside, almost non-existent, restricted to menu choices (and even then you have to enter words via the D-pad). The second screen, however, is used to show menu screens, meaning you can now multitask while your Urb (shudder) is taking a crap. Useful, but hardly the greatest use of the most innovative games machine of the last decade.

Otherwise, it's business as usual – get your virtual man on the side of the various social groups in the city of Miniopolis by agreeing to everything they say, be they nerds or beatniks. While the spirit of friendliness engendered by *The Urbz* is a positive thing, the sinister urge to conform is a little offputting. Will our children turn out to be communists or Star Trek Borg-folk because of *The Urbz*? Only time will tell.

Aside from all this, there's also the usual Sim-style hand-holding as you have to make sure your little man wees, washes, eats and the rest, which we find quite tiresome.

The Urbz is a decent enough rendtion of EA's latest *Sims* spin-off, but it's a bit of a rehash and hardly the best showcase for DS.

JES BICKHAM



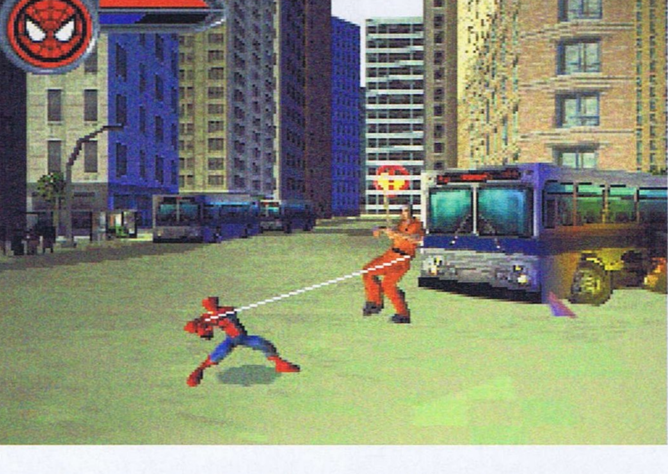
△ **A nice bit of motorbike for you to admire. That's urban for you. We don't trust the blue-haired guy though, or the ginger geezer, so we're not buying.**

DUAL ★★☆☆☆
TOUCH ★★☆☆☆
2




△Spidey takes on the mechanical might of Doctor Octopus.


△Spidey shoots sticky gunk all over an innocent bystander. Just for fun.



SPIDER-MAN 2



FROM: ACTIVISION **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30



When you see this in action for the first time, you can't help but be mildly impressed by the silky-smooth side-scrolling 3D action - it doesn't last though. No matter how nicely it moves, no matter how well animated Spidey is, there's no disguising the fact that this is just another a bog standard side-scrolling platformer – and a pretty mediocre one at that.


△Lucky Spider-Man isn't afraid of heights. Or spiders, for that matter.

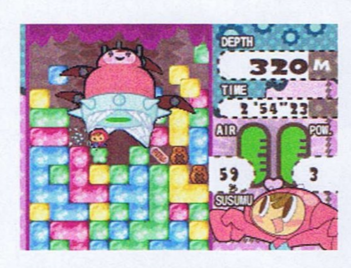
To start with, it doesn't really use the DS's feature particularly inventively. Yeah, you can use the touch screen to navigate menus, there are some interesting boss battles in there that use the touch screen to show the action from a different angle so you can defend from incoming attacks and so forth – but it all feels like an afterthought rather than something that genuinely adds to the experience or to the gameplay as a whole.

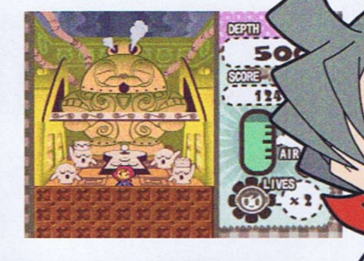
The main problem we have with the game though, is that, even in comparison to some of Spiderman's GBA outings, the design of the game isn't tight enough. The levels are pretty expansive for example – but this means loads of time wasted simply trying to navigate your way through them, or painstakingly trying to weed out the harder to find mission objectives (like hostages that need rescuing, thugs than need punching or bots that need destroying) needed to meet your overall mission quota.

The upshot then, is a game that often finds itself erring on the side of tedium rather than entertainment – which is hardly a recommendation. Take our advice, forget this even exists and wait for something better (like the forthcoming *Castlevania*) to turn up rather than settling for a bog standard game.

GERAINT EVANS

DUAL ★★☆☆☆
TOUCH ★★☆☆☆
2





MR DRILLER



FROM: NAMCO **PLAYERS:** 1-5 **SINGLE CART LINK:** YE
MICROPHONE: NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30



Owner of the gayest dress sense ever, Mr Driller's irresistible compulsion to burrow is motivated by his desire to escape the merciless mockery he inspires on the surface. In his trademark pink-and-blue romper suit, wearing a giant pair of nipples as earmuffs, he's certainly a bit different.

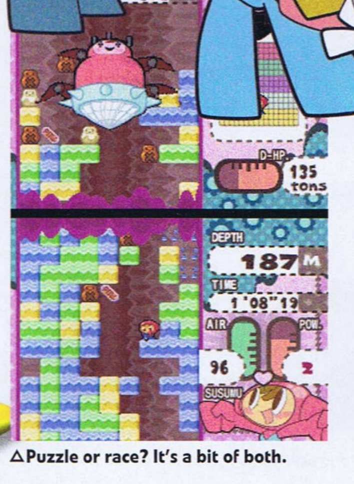
Sadly the same can't be said for his DS debut, which is all but identical to every other *Mr Driller* game. A complete reinvention of the long-running and successful franchise might be too much to ask, but if you've ever played *Mr Driller* on one of its many previous formats, you've played this one.

For the uninitiated, it's a tile-matching puzzle game in reverse. The blocks are already in place as part of an endless mineshaft of colour-coded mud. You have to through them without getting trapped under an avalanche of rubble.

This isn't the most tactical of puzzlers. It's a solid version of a decent puzzle series, but if you want something that plays as different as *Mr Driller* looks, then *Polarium* might be a more fashionable bet.

MARTIN KITTS

DUAL ★★☆☆☆
TOUCH ☆☆☆☆☆
3


△Puzzle or race? It's a bit of both.


△Mr D can rack up some points here.



ZOO KEEPER



FROM: IGNITION **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** YES **COST:** £20



A handful of months after the original Japanese release and the shared office copy now has table after table of high scores that are untouchable without superhuman feats of animal-shuffling prowess. So yes, we're still playing it – which is proof enough that it's puzzler worth your consideration.

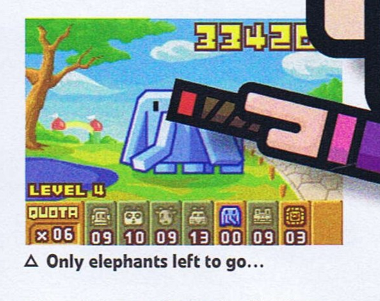
The premise is pretty simple. Swap coloured animal heads around (either horizontally or vertically) so that you match them up in lines of three or more. That's basically it – and this dynamic is milked across a number of different modes that offer variations on the theme. Normal mode is a succession of increasingly tough levels that need to be cleared, Time Attack requires you to rack up as big a score as possible in the allotted time, while modes like Quest are more specific in their requirements (like catching specific animals at the expense of others.)



△ By delaying your rise through levels, you can rack up huge scores.



△ This is your double-point lucky animal. Milk them for all their worth.



△ Only elephants left to go…

It's ludicrously compulsive – exactly the kind of trait that makes a good puzzler. Many people (since we've made no secret of our love for the game) have criticised it for it's lack of skill and that it basically boils down to your powers of observation. Yes, this is true to a point, but as you play longer and dig deeper, there are definite strategies you can use and plans you can lay down to rack up bigger and better scores – and it's here that the game proves itself to be incredibly addictive.

Between this and *Polarium*, the DS has a solid pair of puzzlers to keep anyone happy…

GERAINT EVANS



DUAL ★★☆☆☆
TOUCH ★★☆☆☆
4



△ If you can't spot a scoring move, use the binoculars on the right there.

POLARIUM

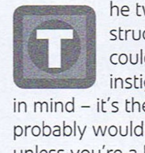




△ You get loads of these puzzle stages to clear, and they start getting so tough by about level 50, you'll need to be some kind of puzzle god to complete them all.



FROM: NINTENDO/MITCHELL **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £20



The two-tier pricing structure for DS games could almost have been instigated with *Polarium* in mind – it's the kind of thing you probably wouldn't pay full price for unless you're a huge fan of eye-wateringly intense puzzlers, but at a 'mere' £20 it's got to be worth a go.

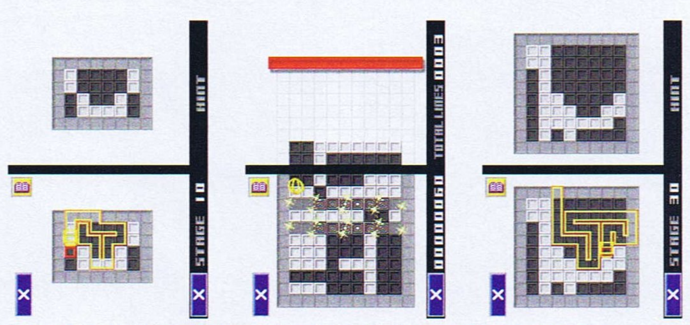
As sequences of black and white tiles shuffle down from the upper screen, you've got to flip them over to make horizontal lines of the same colour by drawing a long line that touches all the ones you want to change. The line can't cross itself at any point and the only way to match tiles fast enough to outpace the relentless shuffle of new arrivals is to draw lines that clear large portions of the screen in one shot. Which is, of course, incredibly difficult.

Once your brain has slowly and painfully grown accustomed to viewing both screens at once, paying extra attention to the upper screen to plan high-scoring strategies and set up big combos, you can try various challenges and puzzle modes to learn the not-remotely-obvious techniques for clearing complicated tile patterns. Once you manage to perform one of those in the heat of an actual game, it's so intensely satisfying that sore eyes, a thumping headache and the sacrifice of a £20 note seem a small price to pay for what is essentially an excellent puzzler.

MARTIN KITTS



△ Yipes! Reckon the game wants us to go somewhere. But where? Where?



△ Doesn't look like much, but this is a hypnotically appealing puzzle game.

DUAL ★★☆☆☆
TOUCH ★★★★☆
4

ASPHALT URBAN GT



FROM: UBISOFT **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £25



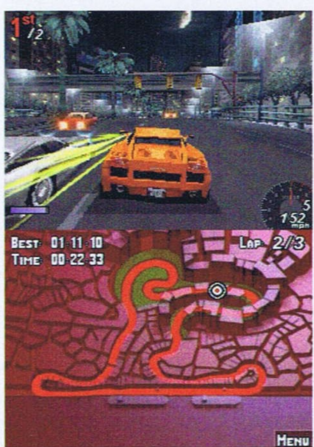
Possibly the worst of the DS launch games, This should be ignored in favour of almost anything else you can get.

Don't be fooled by the technical excellence on display (it looks good) – this is as basic and unrewarding a racer as you could hope to see. Handling is incredibly stiff and lacks subtlety. The boost system is cretinous beyond belief – you hold down A to accelerate, and tapping it again boosts. So releasing A to, say, brake, and then hitting it again to accelerate will see you boosting. Unless you've run out of boost-juice, of course. It's maddening – why not use a separate button to boost?

To be fair, there's plenty of game here, with plenty of upgrading opportunities, but when it's no fun at all to play, what's the point? It doesn't even use the touch screen.

JES BICKHAM

DUAL ★★☆☆☆
TOUCH ★★☆☆☆
1



△ **Seriously, don't even look at this monstrosity twice. It's quite hideous.**



△ **Woo-Hoo! It's a pre-scripted 'jumping' cutscene. Genius.**

Hahahahaha! This is like a moron circus!

△ **The logic behind many othe answers is so obscure that it's...**



△ **...more a case of trial and error than anything else. Which is dump.**

SPRUNG



FROM: UBISOFT **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £30

Paying someone 30 pounds to punch you releatedly in the stomach for five minutes would be infinitely more enjoyable than enduring more than five minutes of *Sprung*'s unique interpretation of the word 'gameplay'.

For all intents and purposes, it's essentially a dating sim set on the piste. *Sprung* is simply a long sequence of conversation leavened by the use of items to impress the opposite sex. It's barely even a game, much less something that takes advantage of the DS's unique qualities, and it's filled with hatefully smug characters and odious dialogue. You can play as a girl or a boy, and we hilariously failed the game within 30 seconds by not sounding angry enough with an ex-partner, even though we chose resolutely cheesed-off conversational gambits available to us. Hateful and unnecessary, avoid this at all costs.

JES BICKHAM



DUAL ★☆☆☆☆
TOUCH ★☆☆☆☆
1

PING PALS



FROM: THQ **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1-16 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £20



Ping Pals had a lot of work to do right from the beginning, it had to be better than Pictochat, for starters. This, it seems, was the first major stumbling block. It's like Pictochat but with added inanity.

The minigames don't progress further than 'guess a number between one and ten' (which gets you money to spend in the shop), and the solo chat is unintentionally hilarious (sorry, I loved swearing at angsty American teens, even if they were just AI).

Probably the most irritating thing about *Ping Pals*, isn't how lame it is, it's the fact that they've released a US edition that's just littered with American cultural references. One mini-game was to name ten things on the table at a thanksgiving dinner. Something that only the US celebrates (and that's not to mention the 'Iowa's so flat' gag)...

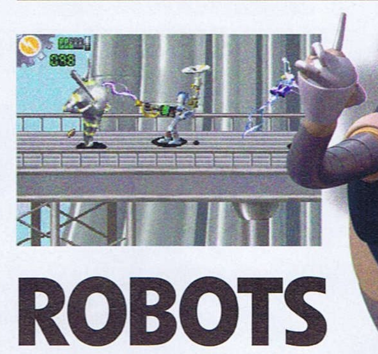
There is no point in paying for another chat applet *[Eh? – **Ed**]* when the DS already has *Pictochat*. Especially when said applet is as life witheringly dull and insipid as this.

TOM SIMPSON

DUAL ★☆☆☆☆
TOUCH ★☆☆☆☆
1



△ **It's Pictochat for the lobotomy generation. Great.**



ROBOTS



FROM: ACTIVISION **SAVE:** ON CART **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOW **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £25



Robots – mechanical purveyors of our fantastical future! Robots – sadly not as exciting as you'd hope.

Based on the upcoming animated film, *Robots* is a barely middling explorathon, a side-scrolling adventure for the young and the mentally undemanding among us. The touch screen utility is, at best, modest, pointlessly allowing you to select weapons and tools when pressing Y does the same thing, as well as offering simple puzzles by letting you rotate objects to fit a shape, and, well, let's be frank - this isn't what you bought a DS for. That *Robots* isn't wholly objectionable gives it some merit; it's certainly a cut above the usual movie-licensed dross in that it's not insultingly poor. But it's slow, simple and really quite tedious.

JES BICKHAM



△ **Shuffle, Shuffle. Bleep. Bleep. Etc.**

DUAL ★☆☆☆☆
TOUCH ★★☆☆☆



△ In order to replenish Yoshi's supply of egg-ammo, he needs to eat fruit.

△ By drawing clouds under Mario's feet, he can cross chasms and avoid enemies.

YOSHI'S TOUCH AND GO

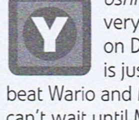


△ Tap the touch screen and Yoshi will launch an egg at the enemies.



FROM: NINTENDO	**PLAYERS:** 1	**SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: YES	**OUT:** NOW (JAP)	**COST:** ¥5,040 (£25)

Touch the dinosaur and make him jump! Cough...



Yoshi's Touch And Go is very nearly the best thing on DS. For all its charm it is just a bit too short to beat Wario and Mario. Still, if you can't wait until May (when it hits the UK) and you're toying with the idea of importing it, you'll find a minor classic and one of Nintendo's most original games of recent times. Fact.

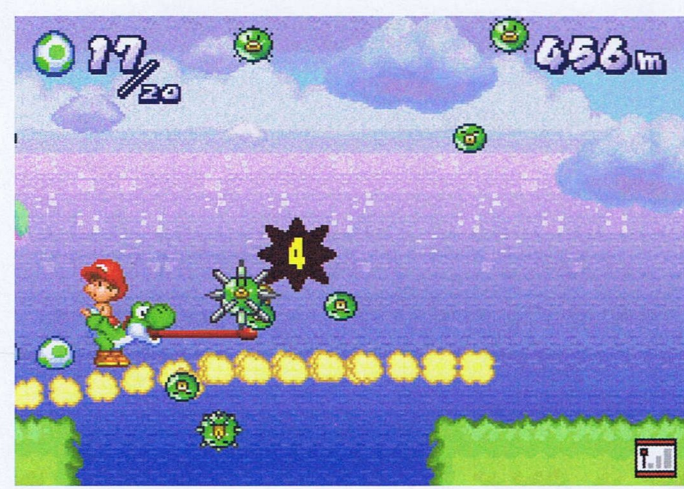
It's a game of two parts, reuniting Yoshi with Baby Mario in similar fashion to *Yoshi's Island* on the SNES and GBA. The first part of the game is an extension of the old DS demo that showed clouds being drawn under a plumetting Mario to break his fall. Here you've got to draw clouds with the stylus to avoid enemies and collect coins. The second part of the game has Baby Mario being carried by Yoshi and again, you've got to draw clouds and platforms so Yoshi can continue on his merry way.

The Yoshi bit has more to it though as tapping the stylus over an enemy lets you chuck a saurian bum-egg at them, a move that can also be used to collect coins and egg-bestowing fruit. Tapping on Yoshi makes him leap, and doing so again enables his flutter jump. Finally, blowing into the microphone destroys all the clouds you've created.

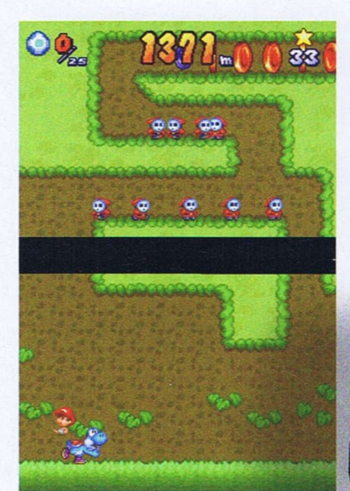
> **"A MINOR CLASSIC AND ONE OF NINTENDO'S BEST GAMES OF RECENT TIMES. FACT."**

It's all incredibly simple and brilliantly implemented, offering both unparalleled use of both the touch pad - there's absolutely no way you could control this game in any other fashion - and the dual screens. See, enemies, coins and fruit appear over both screens, so you'll be frantically drawing platforms and egging things. It all gets very hectic.

It's also a game of great subtlety as going for high scores (which is pretty much the aim of the main



△ When he's in range of anything edible, Yoshi will automatically gobble it up.





△ The artwork is all simple and clear.



△ Try setting off a chain reaction of enemy hits to increase your score.

△ By circling enemies in clouds you can turn them into score-giving items.

mode) requires lightning-fast stylus use and dazzling accuracy. To be the best you'll need to egg-snatch, dispatch enemies and grab coins with a single projectile. It's the very paragon of the Nintendo ethic - anyone can play it but it's as deep as an ocean and very challenging.

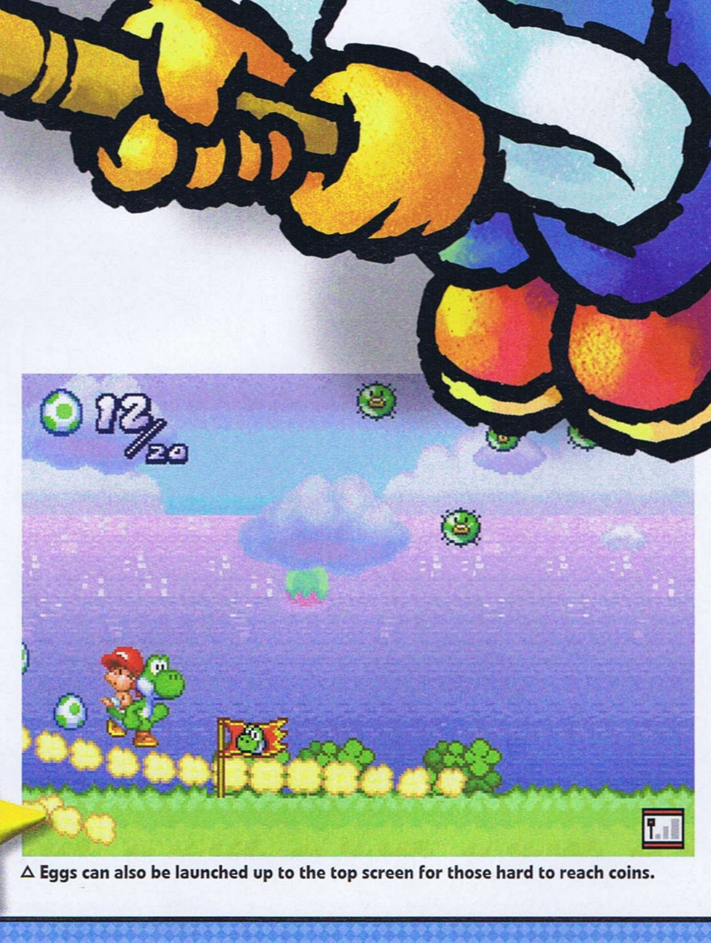
Where the game falls down, though, is that it's small. The main mode contains only two levels - the Baby Mario and Yoshi elements we've just discussed. This isn't a sprawling adventure at all, and as such seems a little mealy-mouthed, offering the unique experience you can only get with DS on the one hand, but a jarringly small portion of it with the other.

It's a disappointing realisation, but that's not really the be-all and end-all of *Touch And Go*, as the three other modes - Endless, Time Attack and Challenge - offer distinct riffs on the main template.

Endless is particularly good. You take Yoshi on an endless and increasingly difficult journey, with every 1000 metres reached seeing you swap over to a differently-hued Yoshi. Like tackling *Tetris'* Marathon mode, it's hugely addictive and brain-meltingly enjoyable.

Touch and Go is a new breed of platformer, and while is doesn't quite reach the heights of *Wario Ware* and *Mario 64 DS*, it is still an essential DS purchase.





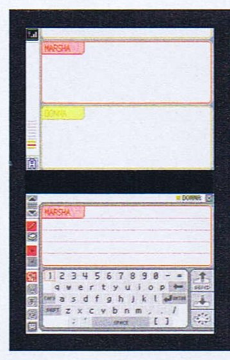
△ Eggs can also be launched up to the top screen for those hard to reach coins.

NGC POCKET

END BIT • END BIT • END BIT

PICTO TRICKS

A few little bits and pieces you may not have known about PictoChat. We're sure there are loads of other little things you can do with the program, so if you find any, then let us know…



DRAG AND DROP

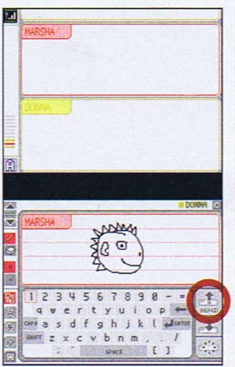
Being the complete idiots that we are, we initially found it irritating that there was no visible cursor on screen. What this meant was that, say we wanted drew a picture and then label it, we had to continually tap the space bar and enter a character to see where the curser was – a very annoying process of trial and error. Thankfully, there's a solution. You can drag and drop a character or letter directly onto the drawing area. After that, anything you type with the keyboard will follow that dropped letter.

POINT TO POINT

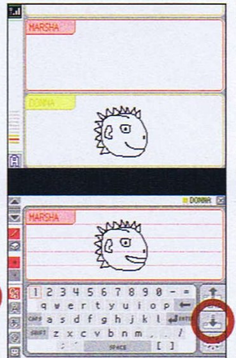
Press and hold the stylus in one spot and then put your finger/pen/stylus, whatever, at another point on the screen. Now lift the first stylus and watch a straight line automatically draw between the two points!

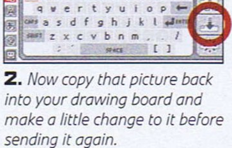
ANIMATE!

This has to be the best feature on Pictochat that we've discovered. With a little time and effort you can animate your little drawings in a flick-book stylee. All you have to do is follow these steps

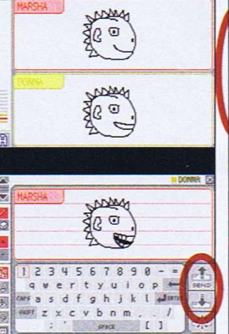


1. *Draw a little picture of something and then click on the send button.*

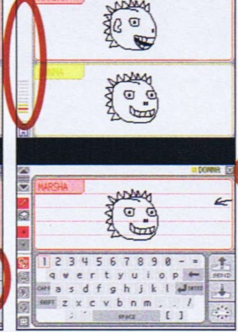




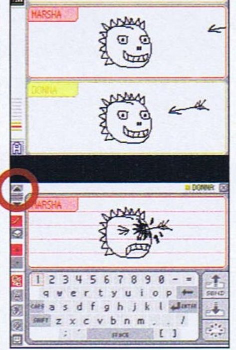
2. *Now copy that picture back into your drawing board and make a little change to it before sending it again.*



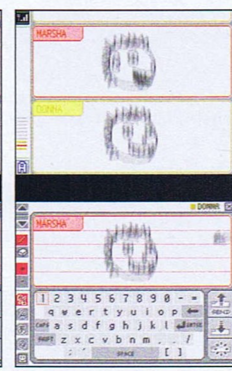
3. *Now copy that picture onto your drawing board again and edit it for the third frame in the animation. Keep sending and copying your picture back and forth – making little changes along the way.*



4. *You can have up to a total of thirty five frames of animation stored at any one time, this is shown by the meter to the left hand side of the message log.*



5. *Once you've put the finishing touches to your final frame of your animation, press the up arrow to flick back through the message log until you reach the top.*



6. *To animate your final creation, hold down the left shoulder button and then half a second later hold down the right shoulder button.*

- If you did it correctly, the message log should shift down one picture at a time, fast enough to bring your animation to life – but not so fast that you can't see what's going on.

- For the best viewing experience, try covering the top half of the top screen with something. Post-It notes work best, by the way.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

We want your Pictochat artwork. It's actually a pretty versatile little feature, and with enough patience you can make some pretty nice art with it – the only downside is that you can't save anything you've done. Which is where we come in. If you turn the lights off in the room and aim a digital camera at your brightly lit DS, you can send in your Pictochat masterworks and we'll print them here every month. So even after you've turned your DS off, you'll be able to gaze at your lovely art skill until the end of time itself. Simply email PICTOART to **ngc@futurenet.co.uk** and we'll print the best of them.

Battle the evil within!

12+
www.pegi.info

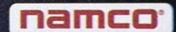


At a time when Earth and Ocean are merely fairytale and the world now exists as floating islands in the sky, two young heroes discover their fates are intertwined as they battle to save their home world. Take control of your party of winged warriors as you journey across the beautiful, expansive environment, battling huge creatures with a fast-paced and innovative combat system.

BATEN KAITOS™ Eternal Wings And The Lost Ocean

Only for Nintendo GameCube OUT 1ST APRIL





OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

REVIEWS

STARFOX ASSAULT

How do you like the way we used Rare's artwork for Namco's game? There's a clue there... P72

WARNING! SPOILERS AHOY! OUR REVIEWS CONTAIN SENSITIVE INFO!



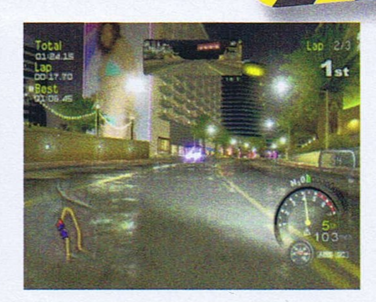
FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 2

Can EA's promising-looking boxer deliver its punches where it really counts? The Judge's decision is on... P62



VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

Capcom's super-slick, ultra-hardcore fighter returns for another round... P64



STREET RACING SYNDICATE

Namco again. This time attempting to stomp *Need for Speed Underground* into the dirt. Good luck to them. P68



AND...



HOW IT WORKS...

Our reviews are the most comprehensive on Earth. We devote more pages to the games you want to know about, and give you loads of detail. We don't rest until we've played a game enough to pinpoint ALL of its strengths and weaknesses, and are able to deliver the most honest, no-nonsense verdicts around.



TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

Out with nonsensical Quantum Leapery, in with the coherent storyline and ninja monkeys. Free Radical and EA up the ante in another top-notch multiplayer FPS... P50



FIFA STREET

EA takes its football Wes'side. Some might even go as far as saying, 'Wiki-wiki-wild-wild-wesside'. That is, if they had something *seriously* wrong with them. Review on... P58

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24
Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured this game is absolute crud.

25-49
A dissapointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74
Some great bits, some not-so great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89
Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+
Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.

NGC STAR GAME

THE SCORE BAR

The verdict explained for you...

PROS AND CONS

Because we think it's important to provide you with balanced reviews, we'll sum up the game simply with some quick plus and minus points.

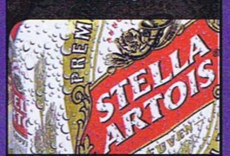
+
- Only lasts 12 hours.
- Free gin and tonic with the entry fee.

−
- Green.
- Slimy.
- Gives a bad name to amphibians.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Not all games are good (unsurprisingly) – so you'll be wanting to know what the alternative is. We'll provide suitable suggestions here.


IF YOU LIKE THIS...
NGC Nights
Deadlinesoft Inc
NGC/106, 110%
Who says staying in the office until 11.30 at night for a week can't be amusing...



VISUALS AND SOUNDS

Gamecube sends PS2 packing. Do the visuals and sounds show this?

4 VISUALS
There are some things a grown man need never see...

5 SOUNDS
Squelching is one thing, but croaking? Unacceptable.

MASTERY

How well does the game make use of the Gamecube's startling hardware?

5 MASTERY
By 4.30 he was all over the shop. An embarrassment.

LIFESPAN

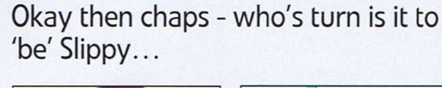
Will it last you a lifetime or a couple of minutes? This is where you'll find out for sure...

9 LIFESPAN
Only one night - but it felt like an eternity. We want to go home now.

VERDICT

We don't throw scores around – we give a game what it deserves. Here you will find the definitive verdict as to whether you should bother purchasing a game.

VERDICT
Slippy's Night Time Adventure, while certainly memorable, is not an experience we'd like to repeat.



MEET THE NGC TEAM

Okay then chaps - who's turn is it to 'be' Slippy...



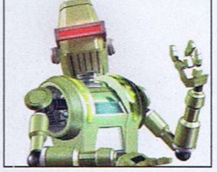
TOM. E
"Me! Me! Slippy's like, the best one right?" "Yes, that's right... the best-est." Oh how we laughed. He'll learn eventually...



MARTIN
"They all disgust me. Let's euthenase them before they upset our ecosystem's delicate balance." "?" Star Wolf it is then Kittsy.



PAUL
"Yeah, I know she's blue. And furry. And she has a tail. But you have to admit, she's kinda foxy." "Like a fox you mean?" "Er, yeah".



GERAINT
Weeks of non-stop Starfox saw Geraint weeping into the office copy of P.N.03. "Sweet, sweet, blork," he cried, "Please forgive me..."



TOM. S
Taking over from Mim, new-boy Tom wanted to stamp his authority. "Give me the "&^%ing dog", he barked. "Um, okaaaay"*



JES
"I am the great Leon!" Jes shouted over and over, until it simply wasn't funny anymore. Guess this one's a no-brainer then...

TIMESPLITTERS
FUTURE PERFECT








Like Doctor Who, but with more guns and monkeys…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	FREE RADICAL
RELEASE DATE	NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40

How do you follow a game like *Timesplitters 2*? A game that was universally praised and that has offered us over two years of top-quality first-person shooter thrills? It's a tricky one, but the answer seems to be 'more of what they like'. *Timesplitters Future Perfect* isn't a brave new step forward for the FPS, nor a radical reimagining of the *'Splitters* template – rather, it is the game *Timesplitters 2* should have been, as it irons out the few kinks and flaws from the previous game. All good news, right? Sort of, because while this is a better game, it's a hugely familiar one, so it never seems quite as impressive as it should be.

This all sounds a little harsh, as *Future Perfect* is about as polished and enormous a game as you could hope for. It's just not very *surprising*, following the template set down by its predecessor almost exactly. Aside from this, our first few hours of the game were a little dispiriting for other reasons, the initial clutch of story mode levels were a little limp. The first romp through humanity's embattled future is both pedestrian and simple. The second level, a WWII-themed slice of castle storming is better, but then things dip again with a largely tedious team-up with tiresome hippy spy Harry Tipper as you join him in a monotonous trudge through enemy barracks and an underground installation that substitutes size for interesting objectives. Not great.

Things get better, though – more on that in a

ARCADE ACTION

Three arcade leagues full of hectic battles with a twist...



Rockets 101 kicks off the arcade leagues and it's really bloody hard (you've only got rocket launchers to kill people with, funnily enough). Our tip is to nick the invisibility power-up as soon as possible…



Shrink is a vastly annoying but mind-blastingly hectic romp in the Vietnam level, with teeny tiny enemies who are very hard to hit. Tricky – but with explosives on your side you can't fail.



Commuting Will Kill You takes place in the excellent London Underground station-style level and you've only got a certain amount of lives. For bonus fun you can pull switches and let trains through…



The Vampire game mode (killing enemies refills health) returns in Vamping in Venice, complete with the excellent harpoon gun, one of our favourite weapons in Timesplitters: Future Perfect. *Ace.*



Big Game Hunt is top sniping fun – you against a legion of the horrible 'Deerhaunters' on the excellent Siberia level. Reckon you can get a head shot for every kill? It's completely doable, you know…

moment. Despite a seesawing quality level, the story mode now takes much more care in establishing a narrative, an ultimately welcome touch. Protagonist Cortez is a loveable lunk, all Vin Diesel features and gormless charm. Rather than leaping into different characters, you play as Cortez all the way through the game.

The many cutscenes that link each level together, offer both superb animation and mostly-superb voice-acting. Most of all, it's genuinely funny in places. Cortez's schoolboy eagerness to make his awful catchphrase work is invariably met with a blank stare or derision, but succeeds with disarming sweetness when he meets an alternative version of himself. Indeed, the game makes much of a peculiarly British comedy of embarrassment, with many brilliantly timed uncomfortable silences; but it's also genuinely amusing in a broader sense, with lines such as 'shoot anything with teeth bigger than its face'. Also your commanding officer's glee at your mission success enriches the shooting wonderfully.

Basically, story mode now flows, makes sense and entertains where it didn't before. Where it falls down is that *Timesplitters 2*'s story mode was simply an excuse to visit several different temporal and geographic areas in iconic fashion. This was

> **"AS FAULTLESS AND HECTIC AS YOU'D EXPECT"**



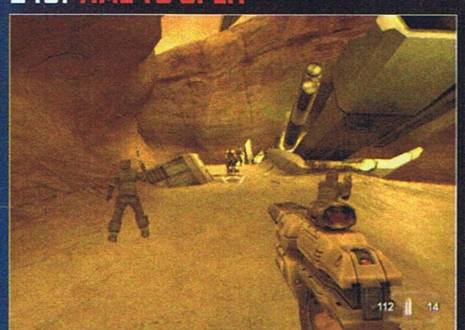
FELINE FINE

The huge wealth of challenges and arcade leagues now offer some distinctly unusual gameplay possibilities – one allows you to race radio-controlled cats, would you believe? You can also stick them into your own multiplayer maps. You know, just for a bit of fun, like.

THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE

What's in store? Only time can tell…

2401 TIME TO SPLIT



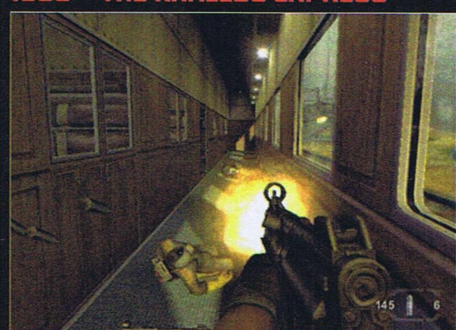
A boring introductory level, but it does serve a purpose as you'll revisit it later from a different perspective.

1969 THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION



A characterless trudge through a Bond-style baddie's base. Not half as good as it should be, really.

1969 – THE KHALLOS EXPRESS



A charge through a train that deliberately brings to mind a certain level from a certain N64 FPS…

1994 WHAT LIES BELOW



This is more like it – *Resident Evil*-style shenanigans (torture the captive zombies!) spoilt only by a tedious boss.

2052 BREAKING AND ENTERING



A *Perfect Dark* homage that even sports a rooftop break-in and combat boost-style time grenades.

2243 MACHINE WARS



Shades of the Terminator here. Drive an enormous mech, a futuristic tank and blow loads of robots into little bits.

1924 YOU TAKE THE HIGH ROAD



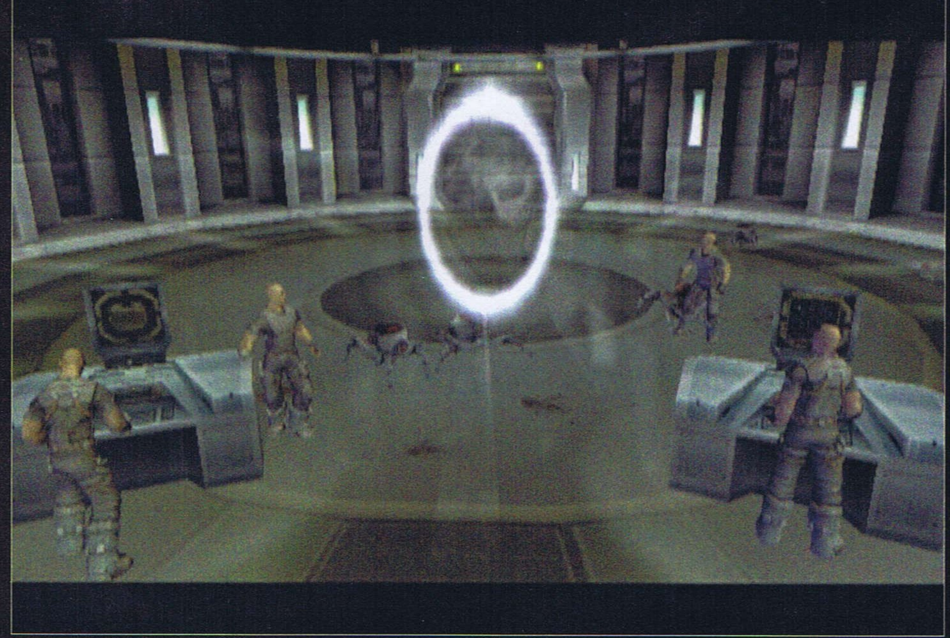
Excellent period housing – but underneath an island. Imaginative and atmospheric, this is a good 'un.

2401 THE HOODED MAN



A short return to the future that satisfies only in that it offers explanations for Time To Split. Clever but humdrum.

MEET YOURSELF!



Brilliantly, Free Radical have plenty of fun with time paradoxes, often seeing you helped out by a future version of yourself, and then later on having you assist the past version of yourself. It reaches its zenith in a delirious multiple-Cortez moment where you end up doing everything that each Cortez does – solving puzzles, shooting robots and more. Brilliant. Plus! There's a hilarious inverted Bond villain moment where Cortez tells Crow (the bad guy) everything that he's been doing *before* he's actually done it, thus giving him the idea to do it all in the first place. Just superb.

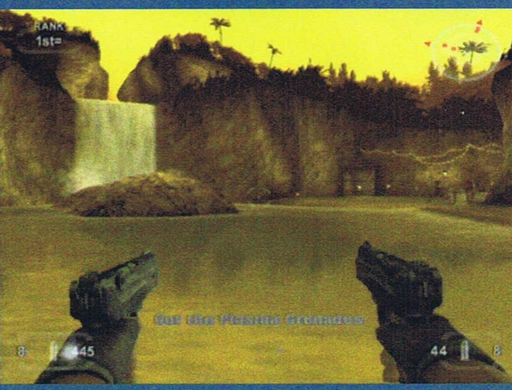


MULTI-MANIA!

Once again it's the multiplayer mode that is the icing on the cake. Say hello to some of the new levels.



■ Siberia is brilliant, offering a huge central area ripe for sniping and claustrophobic interiors, plus a dam-style section. A firm favourite.



■ Vietnam is just lovely, bathed in a golden sunset with two main areas separated by a huge lake. It's an intense experience to say the least.



■ VR is full of Tron-style splendour and features in a brilliant monkey-based arcade league challenge. This really messes with your head.

ultimately a strength, as it was immediately apparent what each level was trying to be. *Future Perfect*'s story mode levels suffer in comparison because they're not so obviously genre-specific and therefore less immediately memorable. The aforementioned Harry Tipper level, for instance, barely registers as a '60s-set Bond spoof (certainly in comparison to its predecessor's effort). It's only towards the end of the game that things come together for *Future Perfect* and Free Radical's imagination takes flight, enabling them to get beyond the identifiable homages to *TS2*. The You Take The High Road level is a case in point, involving an aquatic under-island base that breathtakingly reveals itself to be a miniature town. In the final analysis, although story mode now actually warrants the use of the word 'story', it peaks and troughs more than it ought to.

Elsewhere, it's business as usual, with a raft of stupidly addictive arcade league mini-games and challenges, some of which make splendid use of the gravity gun-style uplink arm widget, seemingly inspired by Free Radical's dabbling with telekinesis in *Second Sight*. Although this plays less of a role in the story mode than you might think, shooting hoops with it or decapitating

TIMESPLITTERS: F… E PEFECT

It's time to... forget it

△ Destroy the orb! And then fight an enormous battle mech.







△ If you're quick you can shoot the plane.



△ The dispersion rifle is a bit like one of those guns from the film Minority Report that throws the enemy backwards.

people with boxes is sterling entertainment. The multiplayer mode is as faultless and hectic as you'd expect, with some cracking new levels sharing space with the return of a few old favourites.

While objectively we couldn't give a fig about the PS2 and Xbox versions of the game, in comparison the Gamecube version of *Future Perfect* lacks an online mode, which we can't help but be a touch annoyed about (which isn't really Free Radical's fault). But if you've got three friends, you won't miss it at all.

Finally, the mapmaker also returns. It's less confusing to use than before and offers a wealth of improvements, with open multi-levelled arenas now a possibility, complete with exterior touches and the addition of vehicles. More complex but arguably more impressive is the ability to create detail-stuffed story mode levels, complete with objectives and event triggers. It is definitely much trickier to get a handle on this aspect of the mapmaker than simply making a multiplayer map, but it's a breathtaking achievement and a brilliant addition to the game as a whole.

All in all, *Future Perfect* is a case of refinement rather than revolution (for instance, more traditional control is now available, with the option to use a fixed crosshair rather than the off-putting-to-some swinging aim of before) and as such simply didn't impress us from the off as much as *Timesplitters 2* did. Familiarity doesn't breed contempt, but it does dull *Future Perfect's* sharp edge. But even if the game does occasionally feel a little familiar, it's incontestably polished, immense and most importantly, a rude amount of fun. And look! We didn't even mention *GoldenEye* once! Oh.

JES BICKHAM

"A CASE OF REFINEMENT RATHER THAN REVOLUTION"



MONKEY BUSINESS

While Timesplitters' monkeys were indicative of its peculiarly British silliness, they were also hateful multiplayer gits due to their size (we banned people from playing as them in the office). In Future Perfect, there are cyborg and zombie varieties too.



- Looks fabulous.
- A gaming toy box.
- Improved story mode.



- Is more of an update than a sequel.
- No online mode.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Timesplitters 2
Eidos
NGC/73, 91%
Excellent cartoon shooter spoiled only by some iffy aiming – but it's a modern classic nonetheless.





9 VISUALS

Super-clean and beautifully designed.



8 SOUNDS

Excellent music and decent voice acting.



9 MASTERY

Immense and it rarely stutters at all.



9 LIFESPAN

There's so much here that it'll take forever to truly finish.

VERDICT

Its impact is blunted by a wealth of similarities to *TS2*, but this is still very polished and immensely entertaining.



HOW TO... MAKE MAPS!

In which we take you through Future Perfect's mapmaking mode. Capital!



Timesplitters 2 featured a mapmaker, of course, but *Future Perfect*'s equivalent mode is bigger, better and even easier to use. Here's a rough step-by-step guide on how to use it as far as creating a deathmatch level is concerned. Also, you may remember that way back in issue 76 we recreated a selection of classic *GoldenEye* maps with *TS2*'s mapmaker – we've sort of updated that here by recreating the all-conquering Bunker map. Enjoy!

THE BUNKER – OVERVIEW

Ah, the bunker. How it brings back glorious memories of lost lunchtimes playing *GoldenEye* in the **NGC** (then N64) office. It's a masterpiece of design and is simple to make in *Timesplitters Future Perfect*, although you may not think so if you're new to mapmaking as the level is split over two floors. But follow our instructions and you'll grasp the basics in no time.



STEP 1



At the top right of the screen there are a number of options that can be scrolled through with the D-pad. Tile is the one you want. All you do is select one and plonk it on the grid, there's a key in the bottom right-hand corner.

HOW IT COMPARES

So how did we do? Let's take a closer look…





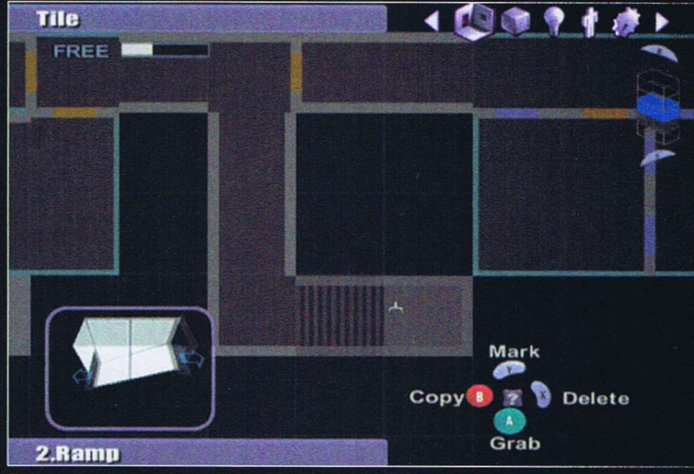
We couldn't make the well at the end of the cells, the cells themselves have been accurately made with windows and doors. Sadly we couldn't get the prison bars effect, though.

STEP 2



Creating rooms and corridors is easy. Just be aware that where you want walls you'll need to use the specific corridor tiles, or T-junctions and corners, which is how we created the large room with the alcoves on the lower level.

STEP 3



Ramps are your main mode of getting between levels. Tile 2 – called Ramp – is used here. When you place it, make sure it's the right way around! Pressing R allows you to move up a level and the ramp will be shown when you do so, so you'll know where to connect floors.

STEP4



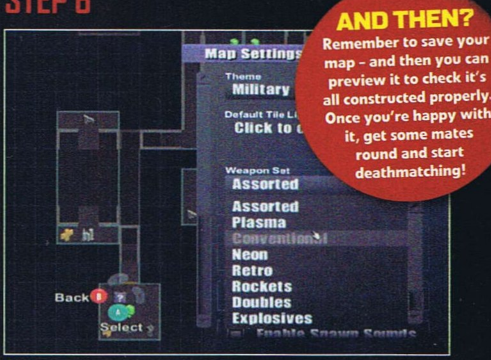
Doors and windows are easily placed. Go to the Items list – next to the Tiles list in the upper right-hand corner of the screen – and you can grab doors and windows and place them where you want. Be careful when creating the cells on the lower level, which are separated by windows.

STEP 5



The final things you'll want to place on the map are weapons, ammo, health, body armour and – crucially – start points, which are where you'll respawn once killed. In Bunker's case, simply copy weapon placement from the original *GoldenEye* map.

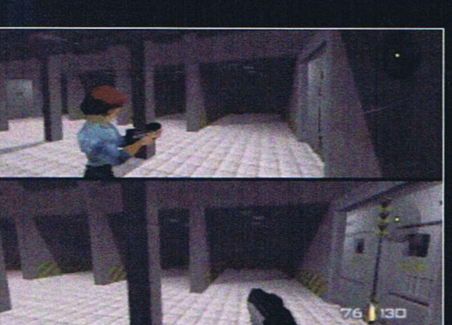
STEP 6



Press start and bring up more options, and select the weapon set. If you've set up your own custom weapon sets in Arcade mode, you can even select them for use here too. You can also choose the level's theme here – we've gone for Military for the proper Bunker effect.

AND THEN?
Remember to save your map – and then you can preview it to check it's all constructed properly. Once you're happy with it, get some mates round and start deathmatching!

ALCOVE ROOM



Remember the room with the alcoves and pillars, where you could get the body armour? We recreated it with help from tile 35, Small Open Pillars. Lovely.

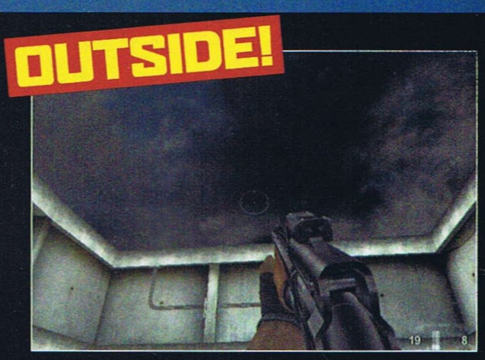
CONTROL ROOM

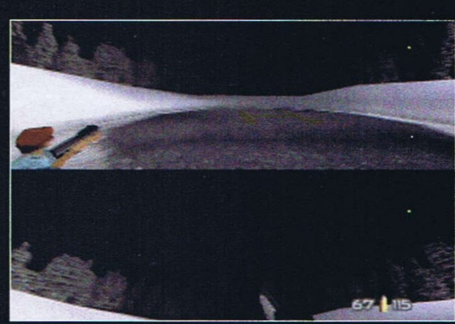




You can't reconstruct the glass-fronted alcoves on either side of the control room, but with help from tile 19 we got close, with small rooms adjoining the upper levels.

OUTSIDE!





Using tile 11, you can add sky for an exterior effect. Go to Map Setting, deselect Indoor Level then select what type of sky and weather you want.

△ Get a gamebreaker and blast the ball, Shearer style, into the top corner of the net.

△ La roulette. The move that even a conference clogger could pull off in old *FIFA* games.

THAT'S LIQUID FOOTBALL

Nearly every goal is as good as that goal Brazil scored against Italy in the 1970 World Cup. Pity Pele and Carlos Alberto aren't in the game and Wolstenholme isn't commentating.



PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	NOW
(PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



FIFA STREET

Football takes to the streets. But, alas, there are no jumpers for goalposts to be seen...

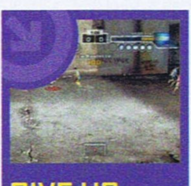


orget about playing as Gary Neville, old *FIFA* games were all about being Michael Owen. You know, there was no point in passing the ball sideways, patiently building moves when you could pick up the ball on the half-way line, beat the entire defence with one player, then tap the shoot button and watch the ball bend into the top corner. How did you do it? No idea, but it looked damn good.

FIFA Street is EA's attempt to put the fantasy back into football. While *FIFA* is busy pursuing PS2's *Pro Evolution Soccer* to win back the hearts of 'real' football fans, *Street* forgets about realism and goes for five minutes of quick keepy-uppy, overhead kicking four-a-side thrills. Only this isn't the jumpers-for-goalposts stuff of park football; here every player is as good as Ronaldinho.

That's the idea. Bundling the ball over the line after a goalmouth scramble isn't sexy football and won't win you any friends here. To win the cups and buy the best players for your team you need to bend it like Beckham, run like Robben and shoot like Shearer. When you've only got four players and one of them is Kenny Cunningham, it doesn't look very promising, but it doesn't matter if you're playing as Birmingham defenders or a Brazilian showboater, they can all flick the ball up, beat their man and volley it into the top corner.

The easiest way to get skill points is to play keepy uppys. Just by repeatedly tapping the Y button you can play a good game of head tennis, flicking the ball from one side of the pitch to the other. Then, when you're in a good



GIVE US A BREAK

You'll have to string together some skills. Try standing in your own half and pressing the random trick button. When you've stopped showboating, flick the C-stick up to lob the ball, and then hit shoot to smack it first time. Score with one of these and the meter will fill up.

"YOU'LL SEE AN AMAZING PASS, SHOT OR SAVE EVERY FIVE SECONDS"

FIFA STREET

Like NBA Jam but with football



FIRST TIME

Don't bother trying to control the ball. There's no point as not only will someone close you down, but you won't score big points when you smack a volley, Rooney style, into the top corner. So if the ball is in the air, either pass or shoot first time. Of course if you are in some space you can dribble, but the commentator will get rather excited.



△ "Makelele! That goal was wicked". The commentary is truly terrible.



△ The keepers are pretty good, so you'll have to direct your shots.



△ The only real problem (but it's a big one) with *FIFA Street* is that you never feel like you're in total control. Press shoot and sometimes your player will head it, but on another occassion he'll do an overhead kick.

RULE THE STREETS

This really is fantasy football



YOUR THE MAN

First create your own player. It's not that advanced – you can't mess around with mouths and noses, but you can give them David Beckham-style tattoos.



KICKABOUT

Then when you've picked your team of Premier League cloggers, go for a kickabout in the street. It's first to five. Win seven of these matches and you can compete in the cup.



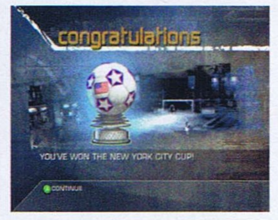
SIGN ON

If you earned big points, you can try and sign a good player like Makelele. But you'll have to play against Makelele's current team. Win and he's yours



UP FOR THE CUP

Now try and win the cup. It's no longer first to five and it's a lot harder than having a kickabout. If you win, you'll unlock new kit, new arenas and crap haircuts. Brilliant.



WINNER

Now you've won the New York Cup, sign some more players with your points and head to Brazil for more four-a-side footy. It really is a global game.

position, just slam B to shoot and your player will head it, volley it or, if you're lucky, chest it down and do a bicycle kick into the top corner. It's like that John Smith's ad, only the end result isn't Peter Kaye hoofing the ball over some sheds; it's Hernan Crespo smashing it into the top corner.

When you're playing against better teams, volleying the ball from one side of the pitch to the other won't always work, as you'll be intercepted. So instead you need the complete works of Cristiano Ronaldo trickery. While some may shout at him for his excessive fancy-dan footwork, here you'll be rewarded for your skills. Start by showing off with some step-overs when noone is near you, then meg one defender, flick it over the head of another and volley it home. If you mix these tricks up with some first time passing, you'll fill up your gamebreaker meter and then the fun really starts.

Overhead kick from the half-way line? Not a problem when you've got a gamebreaker. With the meter full, press L or R when you shoot and you are more likely to score a spectacular goal, but do you use it when you are right through on goal and likely to score anyway, or do you try slamming it from a distance and hope the keeper doesn't save it? This welcome strategic side to the game makes *FIFA Street* as good as its big brother. The keepers are good, but sometimes it's easier to keep it simple and score rather than playing a game of heads and volleys. But if you don't use your skills, you won't fill up your gamebreaker meter quickly and when the opposition get a full meter, you can be sure that they won't miss. Football really is a funny old game here and you can go from being 2-0 up to 3-2 down in a minute.

It's this exciting, end-to-end action of four-a-side footy that *FIFA Street* excels in. Many have tried to make games like this before, but most have just played like normal football games with less players and smaller goals. Here, you'll see an amazing flick, shot or save every five seconds. It never stops – not even for an ankle-snapping tackle from behind. This is no rules football, and while it's no *Redcard* (you won't see a football team of



TREAT YOURSELF

When you see the list of players you can sign, it's easy to forget about another player who is always in the team. You! You must go back to HQ at some stage and use your skill points to boost your own stats. If not, your created player will be the worst player on the pitch.

"A good first attempt and one of the best of its kind"

GET INTO HIM

Forget about the ball. You can flatten rival players with a massive slidey. While this can save certain goals, it's probably not the best practise all over the pitch as it takes a while for your man to get back up.

WHAT A SAVE

The keepers are amazing and can even save gamebreakers. So your first purchase in Rule The Streets should be a keeper as your opponents will have a lot of shots.

GAMEBRAKER

It's not like NBA Street. You will score some spectacular goals, but the ball won't set on fire or anything like that. Also, if you unleash a gamebreaker when you are standing close to the keeper, he will probably save it.









△ Play heads and volleys for big points. 200 of them.

△ You don't see this very often. It's Makelele scoring a goal.

△ Score at the end of a five pass combo for quick gamebreakers.

△ It's harder to score a tap-in than a half-way line volley.

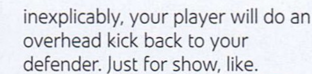
dolphins punching each other for a start), you can hack down your opponent when they are right on top of the goal, then just go down the other end and score. Now that's what I call a counter attack.

FIFA Street is very playable and is as exciting as watching Chelsea with an entire team of Duffs and Robbens, but as with the old *FIFA* games, it's got that old problem where you score an amazing goal without quite knowing how you did it. You can flick the ball over the head of a defender, run onto it and, while he could volley it in the back of the net, sometimes he will just do a crap backheel into the keeper's arms. Even worse, you could be in the middle of a spot of head tennis, ready to knock the ball to the player in space when inexplicably, your player will do an overhead kick back to your defender. Just for show, like.

While we recognise that *FIFA Street* is all about the spectacle, when you're losing in the last minute and the ball rebounds to your player standing on the goal line, you want him to bundle the ball over the line. But you can't always automatically select your players (you have to press A when the ball is free). So you don't have time to get a shot off, and after standing for a second watching the ball bobble on the line, a defender will clear it. It's even more frustrating than being a Norwich City supporter.

So *FIFA Street* doesn't reach the standards set by last month's *NBA Street* (90%), but it's a good first attempt and one of the best of its kind. Next time, sort out the irritating bits, shoot the annoying commentator, stick Mario up front and we'll have another *Street* star.

TOM EAST



"SORT OUT THE IRRITATING BITS, SHOOT THE COMMENTATOR AND STICK MARIO UP FRONT"



NO MARIO

This may be Street football, but EA have drafted in the pros. Players such as Hernan Crespo, Thierry Henry and Wayne Rooney have a kickabout on the concrete. But, unlike NBA Street 3, you won't see any Nintendo characters on the pitch.



- Huge career mode.
- Easy to play.
- Spectacular goals.



- Manually switching players is frustrating.
- Can be a bit jerky.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

NBA Street 3
EA
NGC/104, 90%
***FIFA Street* has more in common with this than its big 11-a-side brother.**



7 VISUALS

Not as smooth as *NBA Street*, but some overheads look great.

7 SOUNDS

Good sound effects, but the commentary is painful.

7 MASTERY

Frustrating, but this will put a smile on your face for a while.



9 LIFESPAN

It took all morning to win our first cup. There are 10 of them.

VERDICT

Doesn't quite match the other EA *Street* games, but now *FIFA* has gone serious, this is good arcade footy action.



NGC 71

MARIO PARTY 6

Talk to the hand, cos the game ain't listening

△ One player with the mic battles three with old-fashioned controllers. Wonder who will win…

△ In this game you shout numbers to make bullets and bombs fly at the other players. This means they know exactly what's coming.



- Loads of passable mini-games.
- A long, involving party game.



- Six in a row.
- Pointless mic.
- Nintendo can do better.

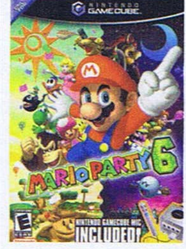


Wario Ware Inc: Mega Party Games
Konami
NGC/97 90%
Four-player Wario. Cheaper and miles better.



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	HUDSON
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



MARIO PARTY 6

Somebody have a word with Nintendo…

As a great poet once wrote, there ain't no party like an S-Club party. But while the pop icons have long since consigned their paper plates and pointy hats to the same dark cupboard as their funky funky beat, spare a thought for poor Mario. He's been throwing exactly the same party for the past six years, and even if he still has the appetite for another helping of sponge-cake and jelly, we're not sure if his guests retain the same enthusiasm.

This time around, Mario's chronic case of sequelitis has spawned a mic peripheral, which you're supposed to use to bark instructions at the game. Sounds interesting – and it would be if the damned thing worked properly. In the wider world of PCs, voice recognition is an unstable technology at the best of times, requiring multiple repetitions before stumbling on the exact combination of pronunciation and inflection the computer was listening for.

In a game, having to repeat commands is a remarkably effective way to spoil the fun for everyone. Nobody around here has managed to get it to work with 100% accuracy, and given that every other Gamecube title uses controllers which do guarantee predictable results, this is a feeble step backwards. The designers knew it, and have limited the mic to just a few minigames. Choose the default settings and you won't play a single mic game, exposing the big USP as just a cheap gimmick.

It's essentially still the same game as the previous versions, many of which we've rated pretty highly in the past, and it's still good fun if you've got three like-minded friends or family members to play it with. Bearing that in mind, we can't give it too much of a kicking. Playing a simple board game and facing off against the other players for minigame battles was a great idea in 1999, and while subsequent versions have altered the balance, to varying effect, it remains a decent concept.

Pick up any one of the others, from number two onwards, and you're guaranteed an equally enjoyable experience with few major differences to distinguish it from the 2005 version. But if you're absolutely, positively determined to pay full price for the latest edition, don't expect to impress anyone with your Gamecube's voice recognition power.

MARTIN KITTS



Presentation hasn't changed a great deal since the beginning.



Bouncy music and some exuberant voice samples.

4 MASTERY

Mastering the microphone would have been nice.

7 LIFESPAN

Simply not that engaging unless you're a big fan.

VERDICT

Not the greatest party ever. This series is in desperate need of a fresh injection of originality.

NGC 70



RING MASTER
In career mode you'll fight in crap clubs and fairgrounds as a lowly amateur before progressing to big venues like LA's Staples Centre and more illustrious titles.

MEDICINE MAN
In between the rounds you can be the medic and soothe your boxer's split eyes with the help of a cotton bud. Brilliant!

TRUNKS
You might not fancy splashing out $2000 on a pair of bright yellow shorts, but they can give you a much needed stat boost.

NOT THE FACE
The commentator will tell you when you've cut up your opponents face. Now you can repeatedly punch the same area to ruin his face.



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	18TH MAR
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 2

What happened to round one? Here's Gamecube's first serious boxer since *Knockout Kings 2003*



Fight Night Round 2 is close to having everything you could want from a boxing game; a control system that'll annoy button bashers, fantastic face-mashing visuals and a massive career mode that takes you from local boxing clubs to the world championship and carries on until you're as flabby as Foreman. And if that's not enough, there's the SNES classic, *Super Punch-Out* exclusive to Gamecube.

All this in the same package should go some way to making up for EA ignoring Gamecube for round one of its boxing franchise. The last time we saw them in the ring was back in 2002 with *Knockout Kings 2003* and how times have changed. No longer are we expected to use one button for hooks, another for jabs and another for uppercuts. Instead, there's a completely new method of controlling your punches. Now it's all about the C-stick. Flick the stick quickly for jabs, rotate it for hooks or push it up to protect your face.

See, *Fight Night* isn't interested in the power-punching, arcade action of *Rocky*. Sure, in the first few bouts of your career you can just repeatedly flick the stick for quick-jabbing KO's, but later on you'll need to defend as the harder boxers will give you a fat lip in seconds. This is where it gets strategic – you can bob and weave, softening up your opponent with jabs, or you can go in for huge



DEFEND YOURSELF
Even if your health is high, you can soon be knocked down with a few big hits. Also, if you keep jabbing, you'll get tired and your punches will lack power. So you should defend, wait for your opponent to launch a haymaker, jab him and then go in for some much bigger punches.

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 2

A boxing sim with REAL blood-daubing!



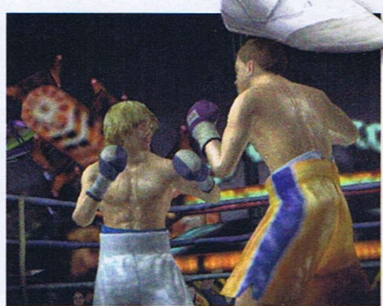
SUPER PUNCH-OUT!

Those were the days. No real boxers, no fancy stick controls and no knockout moments. Only on Gamecube is the SNES classic, Super Punch-Out. Of course without a monster career mode and create-a-character options, it looks very simplistic by Fight Night's standards, but it's still fabulously playable.



△ **You can mess with the size of your character's head and ears.**

△ **You really have to defend against Ali or you'll get a pasting in the first round.**



△ **Nice blond mop top. You can give your character some disgraceful haircuts.**

haymakers which can either get you a quick KO or leave you open to a counter attack.

Thanks to these hooks, it's not all over until you're out for the count. So, like Ali in the Rumble in the Jungle, you can be stuck on the ropes getting a beating, when from out of nowhere you can power up a jaw-snapping uppercut and then move in for an unexpected TKO. But before you can say, "It's just like real boxing," you land what should be your final punch, enter the knockout zone and that's when it all goes wrong.

Instead of hearing the thwack of face on canvas, the camera zooms in, the action slows down, your opponent backs off and you have to land yet more punches to finish him off. You don't even have to land a power punch – a tickle of a jab is enough to see your rival land on the deck, but it totally ruins what should be the most exciting moment of the match. Even worse, sometimes your opponent backs off so much that you can't even get a punch in and before you know it, you're in a clinch and your would-be victim has got half his health back. It's frustrating and, for what is supposed to be a boxing simulation, utterly ridiculous.

It's a shame because apart from this moment of madness *Fight Night Round 2* is a very good, if slightly repetitive boxer. Of course, as with all EA Sports games, its presentation reaches Sky Sports levels of glitz, glamour, and there's an absolutely massive line-up of boxers, each sporting an astonishingly realistic face. But the real treat is the crunching hooks and haymakers – we haven't seen punches crunch so hard since *Rocky*. But when it comes to boxing laughs, nothing will ever beat chinning Mr T.

TOM EAST

GO FOR THE BURN

There are three training programmes before each match. Go for the heavy punch bag. Not only is it the easiest, but you'll get a better all-round stat increase than for the other ones. Result.

> **"THE HARDER BOXERS WILL GIVE YOU A FAT LIP IN A MATTER OF SECONDS..."**



- Impressive visuals
- The C-stick controls work quite well.

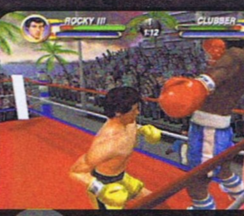


- Career mode can get repetitive
- Rubbish knockout moments.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Rocky
Rage
NGC/74 78%
Fight your way through every film. You can unlock Mr T!



9 VISUALS



Fat lips, swollen eyes and blood. The face damage is amazing.

8 SOUNDS

The commentary is good and so is the soundtrack.

7 MASTERY



Not as much fun as *Rocky* or as realistic as *Knockout Kings*.

7 LIFESPAN



Career mode's massive, maybe too massive.

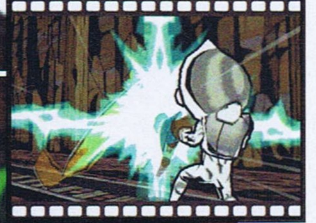
VERDICT

A decent boxer and if not for a wobbly moment, this could have beaten *Knockout Kings*.





BIG AND BOLD
Once again, Joe shows off the very best of cel-shaded graphics and is even more outlandish and imaginative than before.



PUZZLING
Viewtiful Joe 2 isn't quite as demanding as the first game, but there are still plenty of wacky puzzles to solve with your FX skills.



MADSKILZZZ
There's a new FX ability to play with in Viewtiful Joe 2: replay. It lets you record a move that's played back for three times the damage. Nice.



LOVELY LADY
This time around, Joe is joined by his lovely ladyfriend, Silvia. You can swap between them at any time but there are occasions when you'll need a specific character's abilities to progress. Ah, lovely Silvia.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	CAPCOM
DEVELOPER	CAPCOM
RELEASE DATE	1ST APRIL
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	17
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

How Joe can you go? Capcom's innovative and brilliant beat-'em-up returns…



Capcom are turning into Nintendo. By this we mean that their games of late are not only utterly brilliant, they're also capable of huge originality as well as crowd-pleasing brilliance. Check out the gore-soaked wonder of *Resident Evil 4* for the very definition of the latter example, but return to the primary-coloured thrills of *Viewtiful Joe* as a paragon of the former.

Frankly, we were amazed that, in this day of sequel after sequel and licence after licence, Capcom dared risk the cash on developing something so wilfully old-school and yet utterly different as *Viewtiful Joe*, much less fund a sequel. Amazed, yes, but also thoroughly glad indeed. Capcom have made the world a better place with their jump-suited hero.

However, whereas the original *Viewtiful Joe* was the videogame equivalent of having ice poured down your pants - it was that arresting - *Viewtiful Joe 2* can't hope to have the same impact. It is, in essence, more of the same, and if you persevered through the first game's more bloody-minded bits then you'll have little trouble negotiating the trickier sections of part 2. It's as imaginative as before, using Joe's (and Silvia's - more of which in a mo') VFX abilities to slow down or speed up time, but it's all less of a surprise. The brilliant hyper-kinetic combat is still brilliant and hyper-kinetic, of course, but it now wears a comfortable shawl of familiarity, whereas before it mounted its own campaign of videogame shock and awe.

Viewtiful Joe 2 really only stretches itself in the addition of Joe's girlfriend Silvia as a second playable character and a brand-

> **"FOR ALL OUR RESERVATIONS JOE 2 REMAINS WILDLY IMAGINATIVE..."**



ENTER THE WU TANG
Er, well, not really. But! As an enticing separate mode you can access 36 'chambers' (sound a little familiar...?) that act as tough fight-based challenges. If you just can't get enough of Joe then you'll love 'em. They might even make for some top Skill Club challenges, too...

△ A fabulous use of mine carts, here.



- Imaginative
- Inspired
- Big, dumb and cheesy fun.



- More of the same
- Can be quite a hardcore gaming experience.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Viewtiful Joe
Capcom
NGC/84, 90%
The startlingly good original – but be warned, it's harder than real rocks.



8 VISUALS
A riot of colour and the best cel-shading you'll see anywhere.

8 SOUNDS
Familiar tunes but infectiously over-the-top dialogue.

8 MASTERY
It's 2D but it's masterfully designed and technically ace.

7 LIFESPAN
It's tricky, but if you're a Joe pro you'll finish it quickly.

DINO-SORE

Once again, it's the bosses that really impress, at least visually. Our favourite has to be Big John, Dinosaur Sergeant, a stupendously-rendered saurian who you can beat without laying a finger on him. The first time you meet him, simply use your slow power to explode tank shells.

new VFX power: replay. Silvia's replay power allows for a new breed of puzzles that are distinct to those that relate to the existing abilities, which is all very welcome. Silvia's distinct personality and differing skill-set on their own make a convincing argument that this is a superior game to the original, but the well-judged step forwards that *Viewtiful Joe 2* takes can't ultimately compensate for the feeling that this is otherwise more of the same. And you'll be able to pick up the first game for a pittance nowadays, too.

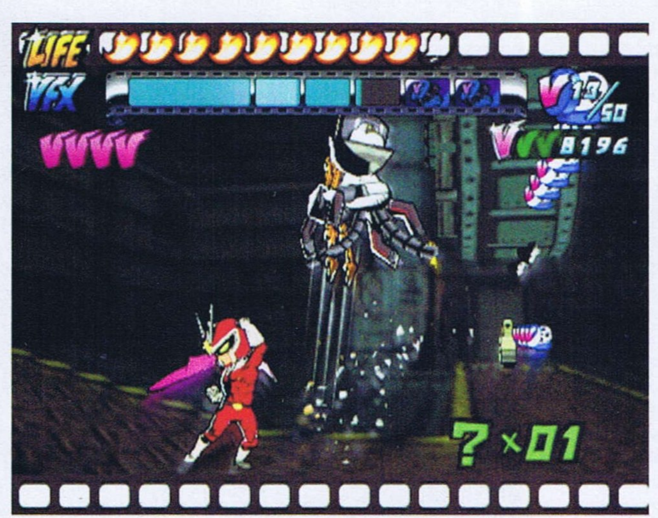
For all our reservations, *Joe 2* remains wildly imaginative, heart-breakingly individual, full of charm and stupendously fun. Three cheers for Capcom, then, eh?

JES BICKHAM



POWER ME UP

Once again you can purchase power-ups and new moves in between levels, this time including Silvia-specific ones. An early favourite for us is the desperado, which adds a second pistol to Silvia's gun-toting predelictions, allowing you to slice and dice from afar. Simply lovely.

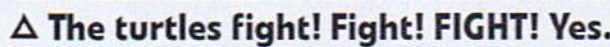


△ Simply beating robots up is an activity full of superheroic joy. We love Joe!

VERDICT

A brilliant sequel that lacks surprises, but builds on the original game with finesse and finely-judged additions.

NGC 87

△ The turtles fight! Fight! FIGHT! Yes.



△ Turtles on platforms, yesterday.



△ Sadly, the controls are slightly unresponsive, meaning that both fighting and platforming is more awkward than it should be. And the camera's a bit dump, too.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2 BATTLENEXUS

The turtles are back! Hello? Anyone? Is this thing on?



So there may be a new series, but hands up – does anyone really care about Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles anymore? Thought not. But should nostalgia get the better of you, then you'll find a half-decent scrapper here to satiate your turtle-lust. But why settle for something that's half-decent when there are so many other brilliant games that are clamouring for your cash?

Anyway, this is a basic basher that really only succeeds in that it allows four friends to play simultaneously, although there's precious little subtlety to proceedings. For the single player, the ability to switch between the four different turtles is welcome as each has their own speciality (such as Raphael's amazing skill at, er, moving boxes, for example). But the puzzles in the game are perfunctory at best and really don't make sterling use of this feature in the slightest (to continue the previous example, when you find a box blocking a door, you switch to Raphael to move it, and, er, that's as advanced as it gets).

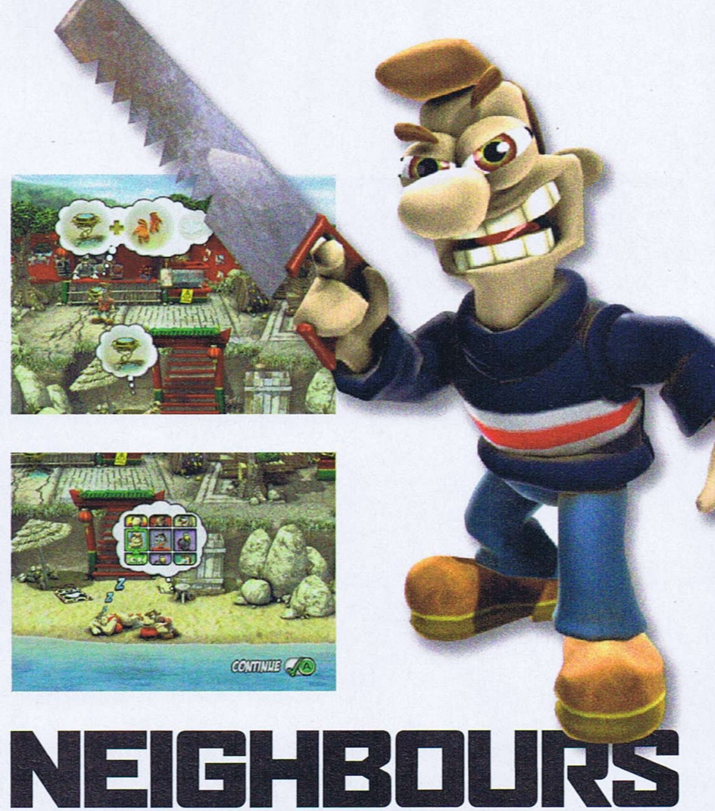
As far as mindless cartoon violence goes, this is serviceable stuff. Sadly, though, the controls are gluey and unresponsive, which rather spoils the flow – and enemies are resolutely stupid and easily dispatched. Rounding things is off is a truly dreadful camera that conspires to give less-than-helpful views. Annoying.

The game looks great, and there's a little variety given the inclusion of racing sequences. Nevertheless, *Battlenexus* struggles to rise above the ordinary and, unless you're a huge turtles fan, it's best left alone.

JES BICKHAM

INFO BURST	
FROM	KONAMI
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD	
PAGES	2
WIDESCREEN	NO
GBA LINK	NO
COST	£40

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING **50**



NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL

The game that's begging for an anti-social behaviour order...

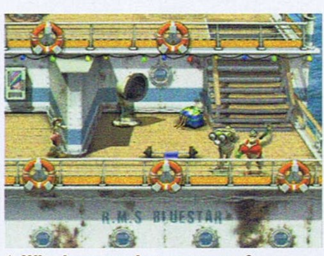


Although £20 might seem relatively cheap for a console game, when it appears to be based on the kind of thing that sold for £1.99 on the Commodore 64, it only demonstrates how badly currency inflation has outpaced imagination.

This is more than just a steaming turd of a game - it's a sphincter-ripping, brown breezeblock. The aim is to give your neighbour a fatal heart attack by following him around the world, playing practical jokes of the Jeremy Beadle school of hilarity.



△ If only they didn't make them like this any more. Retro hell.



△ Who knows what manner of hilarious japes will occur here...

Put deodorant in his food; rub chilli powder on his bog roll, sneak into his bedroom and curl one out right there on his pillow...

The only reason the last one doesn't happen is because the humour never rises above Beano level. There are five or six pranks to play on each of the 20-odd 'episodes', and it doesn't take long before the backgrounds and jokes start repeating. All you ever have to do is pick up the items left lying around the tiny levels and try to 'use' each one in different places until you find the right combination. Then relax and enjoy the badly animated results, followed by the victim clutching his chest as his pacemaker goes into shock induced overdrive.

It's complete rubbish. The fuzzy graphics (reminiscant of the N64) make it impossible to tell what many objects are supposed to be, and the gameplay is all trial-and-error. If the pranks had amusing results then there might be a reason to keep playing past the first five minutes, but since they're all about as funny as a motorway pile-up, this game deserves nothing but our contempt.

MARTIN KITTS

INFO BURST	
FROM	JOWOOD
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD	
PAGES	2
WIDESCREEN	NO
GBA LINK	NO
COST	£20

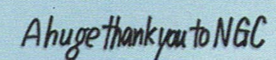
NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING **12**



FOLD HER

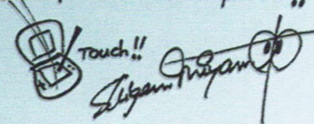
POWER

SELECT START



and its readers for all your Support in the run up to the launch of NintendoDS.

We hope you enjoy it and the new gaming experiences it will provide!!



X Y A B

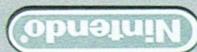
NINTENDO DS

MIC.

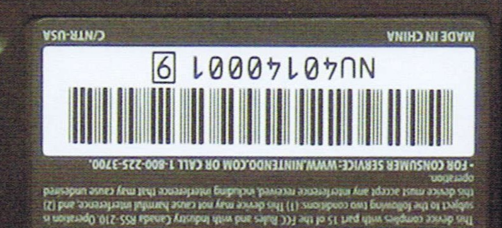
DELIVERED BY

NINTENDO DS™

NINTENDO DS™



A message from



SERVING SUGGESTION:

PULL OUT OF MAG, FOLD IN HALF, DISPLAY WITH PRIDE.



△ You can buy an upgrade which shows you where all the blueprints are. That's cheating!



△ The ball race is one of the more bearable tasks.

△ Wow, you've found a parcel. How exciting!

ROBOTS

It should be called 'collect blueprints and other dull tasks', but that would be a bit long...

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	VIVENDI
DEVELOPER	SIERRA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	21
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



If you had a robot, you'd probably treat him a bit like Rooney. Send him off to do the stuff you don't want to do - washing up, ironing, do your work for you, cleaning the bog, etc.

But Rooney (sadly not related to the Boy Wonder) doesn't mind being treated like a slave. He wants to be an inventor, so he'll do anything that will help him in his task. Like a tea boy wishing to be a producer at record company, the rewards might be great, but getting there is a bit dull. And playing as robot Rooney is excruitiatingly dull.

In fact it's like being a cub on a never ending bob-a-job week as you just do boring chores for robots. To open up a new level, you chat to a bloke (or rather, a metal bloke), he tells you to collect around 16 parts for a robot, blueprints for an invention and so on. Then you have to go around and collect them for him.

"IT'S LIKE BEING A CUB ON A NEVER ENDING BOB-A-JOB WEEK..."

Occassionally you'll get to fight off some enemy bots with your upgradeable bolt-shooter, but a lot of the time you're just running around collecting stuff. It's about as exciting as cleaning the car. So when you're a few blueprints short, you go and chat to another robot who gives you a sub-task. You think it might get a bit more exciting, but he tells you to collect more things, but within a time limit. But the worst thing is that you can actually buy an upgrade showing you where all things you have to collect are. Simplistic and dull, this is a waste of memory card pages.

TOM EAST



- The cutscenes look decent. Well done.
- If you like the film...No, forget that.



- Boring tasks.
- Annoying characters.
- Poor camera.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Super Mario Sunshine
Konami
NGC/73 96%
Throw *Robots* away and let Mario show you how it's done properly.





Nice cutscenes from the film, but it all looks a bit bland.



If you like the sound of a robot ordering you to do a chore...

3 MASTERY

Dreadfully tedious platforming hopping. Nothing new here.



Quite big, but you'll be bored of collecting after an hour.

VERDICT

Chat to robot, collect stuff, yawn. *Robots* may look okay, but it is a tedious treasure hunt.



GOTTA WATCH EM ALL
Digi-ladies. What joy.



RESPECT
Dotted around the city are a number of respect challenges. Drive to each location and a badly modelled 'woman' will set you a task.



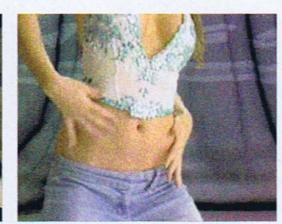
CHALLENGE
These challenges can be anything from tailing a vehicle through the city, reaching a set amount of checkpoints or getting the required respect points.



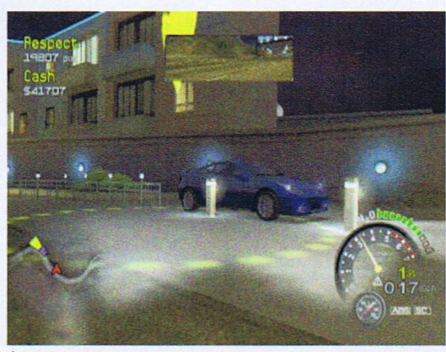
'LADIES'
If you're successful, the girl who set the challenge will be added to your list of girlfriends and, bizarrely, will be stored in a warehouse for your perusal.



'HOOK UP'
You can now choose one to hook up with. When you complete competitions in the game's main race meets your chosen girl will reward you with…



OH DEAR...
…a video of her dancing - quite badly. As you win more races, you can unlock more videos of her in various states of undress – which, frankly, affrights our eyes.



△ **Parked in dodgy alleyways are a bunch of blokes called Keith and Darren – ready to take you on...**



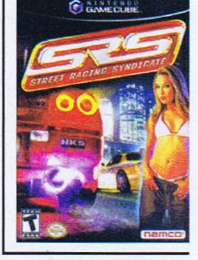
△ **Earn enough cash and you can get yourself some more cars for your garage. If you can be bothered.**



△ **When your cars get damaged, you have to pay extortionate amounts of cash to repair them.**

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NAMCO
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	11
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£35



STREET RACING SYNDICATE

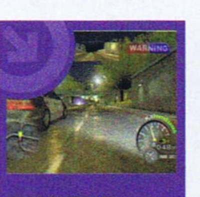
Garish, dull and trashy – it's the Blackpool of illegal street racing…

Considering that *NFSU 2* wasn't anything special, the fact that *SRS* so shamelessly apes it and fails to come even *close* to being as, ahem, 'good' as EA's mediocre effort, doesn't bode particularly well. The premise is the same. There's a city for you to explore, and dotted around the map are a series of challenges, track meets and incidental head-to-head races for you to participate in. These are unlocked by competing in increasingly tough races. From these you will earn respect points and cash – which is earned through race-specific wagers against rival drivers as well as cash bonuses for your final placing overall. In order to unlock the tougher races you need to meet specific quotas for respect, as well has having a suitably beefed up engine – the latter of which you get by customising the vehicles.

Much like *NFSU* the customisation process can prove both absorbing and rewarding. While not quite as comprehensive as EA's racer, there are plenty of options with which to tailor your ride, and there's some satisfaction to be gained from taking the game's basic motors and chavving them up beyond recognition.

Unfortunately, *SRS* falls flat on its face when it comes to the most





BUSTED
Roaming the city streets are a number of cop cars. You get a warning when there's one around and, should you break the traffic laws, the cops chase you. Get caught and you'll receive a hefty fine. Thankfully, the ability to warp you car to places on the map means you don't have to put up with it…

STREET RACING SYNDICATE

Like NSFU but much more average

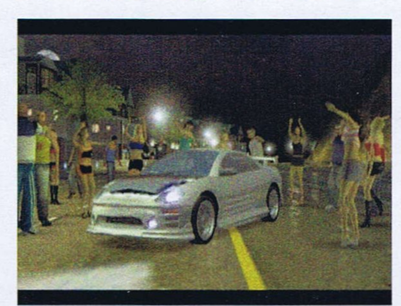




△ Every billboard in the city has pictures of women on. It really is quite bizarre – and indicative of the games repulsive shallowness, both in it's themes and overall gameplay experience.



△ EA's mirrored raceways have a lot to answer for. It's enough to make you go blind.



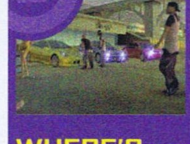
△ No matter how much you beef you car up, it never seems to make any difference.

crucial aspect of the game – the racing itself. To be perfectly honest with you, it's absolute rubbish. There's absolutely nothing *thrilling* about the experience. The sensation of speed is pitiful, whether you're doing 80, 120, or 140 mph – it just doesn't feel like you're genuinely reaching those speeds. It just trundles along, and no matter how much you upgrade your motor, it never really feels any more exciting. Even the game's in-car view offers little in the way of exhilaration. The handling is also something of a disappointment. While many of the later vehicles offer a slightly different racing experience, the overall handling of them feels a little on the stiff side – executing drifts around the game's tougher corners is cumbersome and never truly satisfies.

This could be overlooked if the game was actually a challenge and the rival racers were worthy opponents, but they're not. As long as you continue to ensure your car suitably tooled up, it's rare that you'll ever find yourself fighting for first place. More often than not, you can gain the lead after the first lap and maintain it, which makes everything seem horribly tedious.

What you're left with is a uniquely soulless racing experience. Visually, it's a slightly smoother - but substantially less detailed *NFSU*. The city is barely populated and the horrible road effect only makes the place feel sterile. The only original feature in the game is the trashy girlfriend collecting element *[actually Trip Hawkins thought of first – see page 8. **Ed**]*. Suffice to say we really don't think you should bother with it…

GERAINT EVANS



WHERE'S THE SOUL?

Apart from the odd pre and post racing scenes, where your crew dance around like a bunch of idiots, there's little in the way of human activity on the streets. Sure the city looks nice enough, but there just isn't enough going on to make it feel like a bustling metropolis.

> **"THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NOTHING THRILLING ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE"**



- Nice and smooth.
- Large city to explore.
- Reasonably decent customisation options.



- Poor sense of speed.
- Souless city.
- Annoyingly stiff handling.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Need for Speed Underground 2
EA
NGC/100 69%
Better customisation and slightly better racing.



5 VISUALS
It's bright, colourful and relatively smooth compared to *NFSU*.

5 SOUNDS
Repetitive tunes and speech samples and not much else.

5 MASTERY
It's smooth, but the feeling of speed is pathetic.



6 LIFESPAN
There's a lot here – can you be bothered to see it all?

VERDICT
Although not bad, Namco have delivered a racer completely devoid of both excitement and exhilaration.







"A solid and entertaining affair"





△ Yes that's an ant. A good example of the kind of puzzles to expect.



△ As you can see, the graphics aren't too bad at all.

TAK 2 THE STAFF OF DREAMS

Stunted pygmy boy seeks friend for platforming fun

△ Drown pygmy boy, drown! Ahaahahahaha!



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	THQ
DEVELOPER	AVALANCHE
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	10
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40





Tak himself might be the kind of hatefully lumpen character that it's incredibly hard to empathise with, but his second stab at the 3D platforming lark fares rather better than our hero's looks.

Indeed, even though it's plainly aimed at the younger gamer, rather than those who will obsessively and happily scour Delfino Isle for every single gold and blue coin, this is an exemplary platformer. The first *Tak* was a surprisingly solid affair, and *Tak 2* builds confidently on its predecessor's strengths, to offer a fast-paced and varied experience. In short, it's really surprised us and deserves to be noticed.

Of course, it's hardly original and it feels familiar right from the off, offering all the platformer tropes we've come to expect – running, jumping and collecting – but where *Tak 2* scores is in the imaginative way it resents puzzles and abilities. For instance, village shaman Jibolba has transformed himself into a bug that Tak can fire at certain enemies to either irritate them or put them to sleep, allowing you to, for instance, get a squirrel to throw nuts at bridge-guarding enemies. Or how about getting sprayed with skunk-stench to herd a bear towards a bee hive, where he bloats himself on honey, allowing you to use his distended stomach as a trampoline? *Tak 2* puts a lot of thought into making its puzzles a bit more imaginative and colourful than usual, and the result is a game that, despite the ugly protagonist, does its utmost to endear itself. Throw in vehicle based sections, the ability to morph into animals, potion-mixing and some genuinely amusing cutscenes and you've got a minor treat.

> **"AIMED AT THE YOUNGER GAMER BUT STILL FAST-PACED AND VARIED..."**

That said, *Tak 2* can't compare to, say, the depth and sheer brilliance of something like *Super Mario Sunshine*. But it's a solid and entertaining affair that has us actively looking forward to the inevitable *Tak 3*.

JES BICKHAM



- Remarkably accomplished platforming.
- Well designed.



- The characters are a bit unappealing.
- Nothing new.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Super Mario Sunshine
Nintendo
NGC/73, 96%
Blissfully summery classic platformery. Just brilliant.



7 VISUALS
Wonderfully designed and full of detail. Very pleasant indeed.

7 SOUNDS
Accomplished voice-acting; and there's a lot of it, too.

7 MASTERY
A big, detailed platformer that runs admirably smoothly.

7 LIFESPAN
Can't quite sustain its early momentum but it's a decent size.

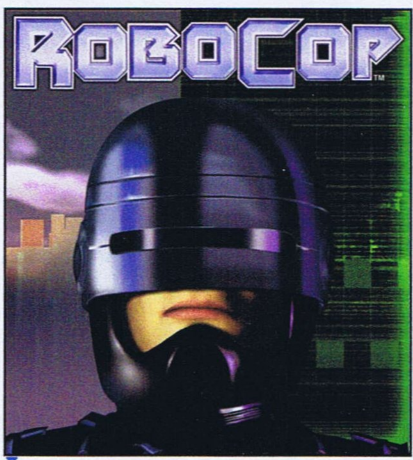
VERDICT
One for the younger gamers it may be, but *Tak 2* is nonetheless surprisingly adept.

NGC 73

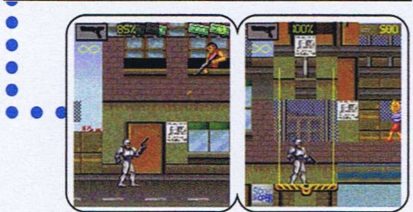
dbi games™

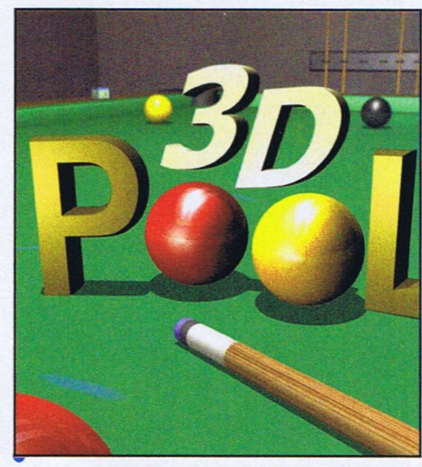
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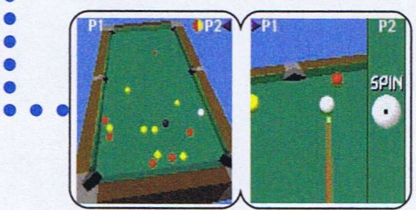
Rated 8.5/10 *by IGN*



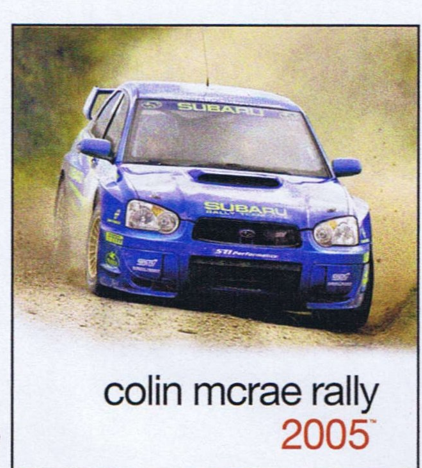


Game costs £5 to download.



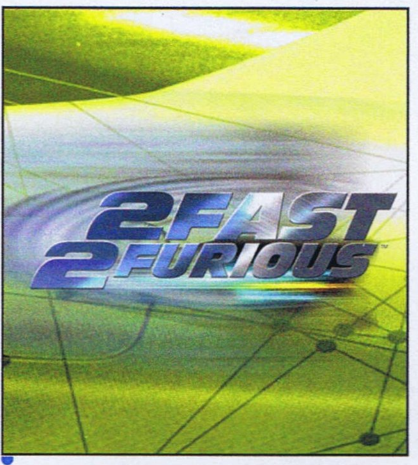


Rated 98% by *Mobilegamefaqs*



Game costs £5 to download.





Rated 8/10 *by Midlet Review*

Game costs £5 to download.



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0511 HIT
0339 HIT
ROB
Affirmative.
0016 HIT
11 COMBO
BARRIER
BOMB
04

STARFOX ASSAULT

Why are they doing it?! Why not make a great Starfox game for a change?



PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NAMCO
RELEASE DATE	NOW(US)
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	5
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	$50 (£30)





Both *Starfox Assault* and *F-Zero GX* were announced around the same sort of time - with Namco to take up Fox's effort and Sega to look after Cpt. Falcon and co. Needless to say, we were all very excited to see what could be done. Both are are more than capable of delivering to Nintendo's super-high standards. Just one look at Sega's *F-Zero* was enough to convince us that the farming out of Nintendo characters to third parties was a good idea. Sega not only managed to exceed everyone's expectations with a game of quite superlative quality - but they retained the essence of what made *F-Zero* so beloved by fans. They didn't throw in weapons or silly gimmicks, and they certainly didn't rearrange the game's structure. They simply gave everyone what they wanted.

"NAMCO... TAKING LIBERTIES WITH NINTENDO'S SHOOTER"

Namco on the other hand, think they know better, taking all kinds of liberties with Nintendo's arcade shooter and pleasing absolutely no-one in the process…







"The less said about Tricky the better…"



FRIENDLY FIRE

Keeping the bogeys off their backs…

Your team-mates frequently run into trouble and require your help. In the Arwing levels, this is simply a case of picking off chasing bogies as they cross your field of vision. On the free roaming, on-foot sections though, you have to either try to get them from the ground or, if there's an Arwing nearby, you can hop into it and engage the enemy from the air. Now this is all very well and good, but when you're deep in the bowels of a cave, trekking all the way back is extremely annoying, especially if you're trying to get the award for keeping your wingmen intact.

PLAIN WRONG

Not only has Slippy been elevated to hitherto unseen levels of total crapness, but they've brought Krystal and Tricky back into the fold. Both Krystal and Tricky were rejects from Rare's N64 game, Dinosaur Planet *They were never supposed to be a part of Starfox – so why for the love of God were they brought in? If they really wanted a female cast member, how about working in Katt from* Lylat Wars*? And the less said about Tricky, the better…*

MISSION LOG

Star trekkin' across the universe…



Fortuna: A gorgeous opener through a fleet and the planet below. Classic *'Fox*.



Katina: A tepid, ground-based bug hunt – although the boss is impressive…



Sargasso: Take out the occupying forces of a space station – then Star Wolf.



Finchina: We like the way that Fox gets buffeted by the winds when on foot.



Asteroid Belt: One of the game's better missions that's reminiscent of *Lylat Wars*.



Sauria: Another tedious romp through Tricky's vile little planet. Ugh.

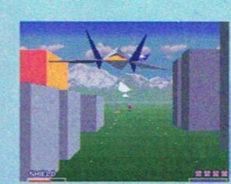

Corneria: Fox's home planet, a huge level that finally uses the sniper rifle…



Orbital Gate: Remember in *Lylat* where you had to defend against missiles…?









BACK IN THE DAY…

When all this was just mud and, er… stars

To make sure that we weren't just looking at the previous games with rose-tinted spectacles, we went back and dug out *Starwing* and *Lylat Wars*. It's safe to say that *Assault* doesn't match up to either game. There's nothing as imaginative as the twisted warp levels from the original for example. Or how about the train chase in the Landmaster complete with alternative ending? Or how about that incredible battle in the skies of Katina? These hold great memories for us – and helped make the games the classics that they are. You won't find anything in *Assault* that's anywhere near them.



WHO'S THE BOSS?

One thing that is done particularly well is the boss battles. Some feel familiar, and there's a decent variety of battles which can get tough on the game's gold setting.







BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

The last level is more Starfox than the rest of the game, offering a hard-as-nails ride through a claustrophobic tunnel It's as if, by the end, Namco finally figured out what Starfox is all about…



ANIMAL ACTION

Sometimes, one cretinous little animal just isn't enough



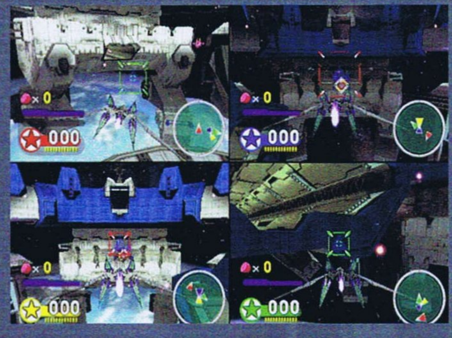
IMPROVED

It's fair to say that the multi-player is better than the decidedly ropey one in Lylat Wars. There are more weapons, more characters and better levels. Strangely, playing on foot or in the Landmaster really comes into it's own when playing in deathmatches.

GET READY FOR ACTION

At the beginning of each match you can select handicaps and any modes of transport you want to include for the match ahead – giving you some scope for tailoring your matches the way you want them. However, some areas can only be played using the Arwing. Funnily enough though, these are probably the least enjoyable of all the levels available in multiplayer.





KEEPING IT TIDY

As a multiplayer game, it's surprisingly well balanced. For example, players on the ground can (with plenty of cheeky stealth tactics and the correct weaponry) confidently take down anyone in an Arwing. What this means is that, no matter what mode of transport you're in, you're never in danger of being dominated.



EXTRA, EXTRA

When you start out, the options and weapons available to you are pretty small. However, the more you play in multi-player, the more things you unlock – like extra game types, more characters (so one of you doesn't have to be Slippy), even new vehicles and weapons. By the time you get the lot, you have a pretty comprehensive multiplayer game.





THE MORE THE MERRIER

One thing we found a disappointing was the fact that matches never truly come alive unless you're playing with three or more players. With just two, matches devolve into mind-numbingly dull cat-and-mouse affairs, where you spend all your time chasing after each other and getting nowhere – especially in the game's larger arenas.

STARFOX ASSAULT

Namco's lesson in the painfully mediocre…





△ This is the only time you ever really need to use the sniper rifle.







After Rare's nauseating *Starfox Adventures*, we felt reassured that, whatever happened, *Starfox Assault* couldn't possibly stoop *that* low. To begin with it marked a return to the 'proper' space-faring *'Fox* of old. The Gamecube *Starfox* that we all wanted in the first place. Before it went all *Zelda* on us.

Surely, all Namco would have to do is look at Nintendo's previous efforts, give them a lick of paint, maybe chuck in a half-decent multi-player and remember to put in a mission select screen for those completed levels. And with Nintendo looking over their shoulder ever step of the way, what could possibly go wrong…?

Well, quite a lot by the looks of things. *Assault*, while showing *some* similarities to the groundbreaking *Starwing* and the quite excellent *Lylat Wars*, has undergone some significant changes. Changes that we don't like one bit.

"ASSAULT HAS UNDERGONE SOME CHANGES. CHANGES THAT WE DON'T LIKE ONE BIT"

The first slap in the face for fans is Namco's bewildering decision to throw away the (rather clever) branching level structure. This was one of *Starfox's* signature features, where the more skilful players would be awarded with harder levels if they fulfilled hidden criteria. If you played like an amateur, then you travelled the easier route. If you played like a pro, a more taxing, not to mention spectacular, journey





SHIP SHAPE

Imagine a world of talking animals. Animals that you'd like to punch right through the face. Now put them in fancy space vehicles. Vehicles with guns. Take a deep breath… and cry.

ARWING

This should be familiar territory for Starfox veterans. The Arwing handles just as you remember it. There are still on-rails levels and free ranging levels to play through, with the added bonus of levels where you're given the choice to get out and have a walk around (if you consider these sections a bonus). While the Arwing-specific levels are by far the best in the game, they still aren't quite up to the standard of Lylat Wars with no multiple routes through levels for example…





LANDMASTER

The Landmaster features pretty heavily this time around. It's a tank that can hover for a short period of time, which is useful for getting up to those high areas that you repeatedly fall off thanks to the cumbersome controls. Still, it's a useful vehicle – especially in for when you're playing multiplayer game, as you can both lock on to air targets and take down ground forces with relative ease. The only thing that irritates us is the machine's horribly slow strafe, which can make it an easy target.



ON FOOT

Think Jet Force Gemini and you'll have a pretty good idea of the way the rather loose handling in these sections feels. The right shoulder button fires your chosen weapon while the twin analogue controls deliver precise FPS style targeting. There are also a number of weapons to collect, from the standard blaster, to rocket launchers sniper rifles and grenades. Unfortunately, not all of these are particularly useful (We're looking at you, sniper rifle and hand grenades…)





WING RIDING

This is another new addition to the series, here Fox stands on the side of an Arwing and you simply move the targeting reticule around the screen while the ship flies around. There are only a couple of these sections in the game, and despite being relatively unexciting, provide a welcome and relaxing change of pace, though the idea of it sounds a lot better than the final execution. These sections are also a good place to rack up huge combos and monster scores, which can be helpful.



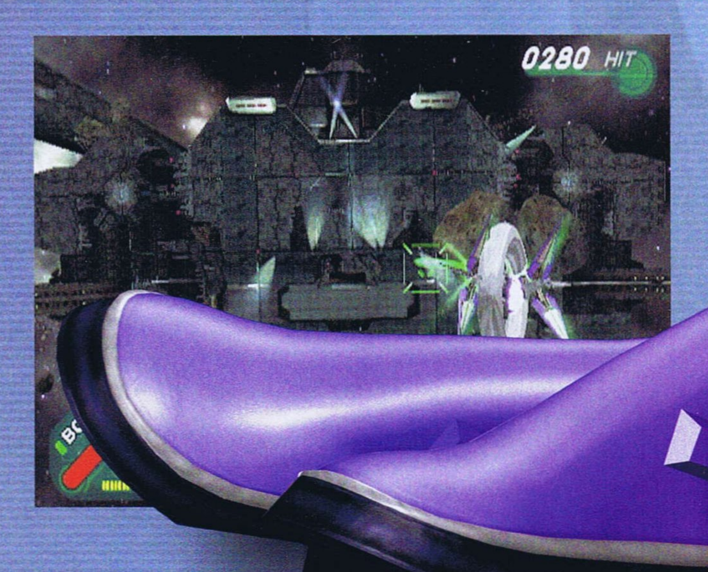
△ **You're thinking it looks nice right? Shame it's all so freakin' tedious.**



△ **The pop-up means you won't see his persuers for a little while yet.**



△ **The on-rails levels are great, but are far too few in number.**



awaited you. It not only meant you could chart your own way through space to the game's final stage (potentially making each game different for every player), but was also a rather cunning way of presenting the classic easy, normal and hard difficulty levels.

This time around though, the game takes a decidedly less subtle and imaginative approach – with a string of stages that you simply play through in order from start to finish, with the option of choosing bronze, silver or gold difficulties before the level begins. Pretty bog standard stuff then – and something that's indicative of the title as a whole. You see, Nintendo's branching system demonstrated great effort on their part. Levels for each difficulty meant more stages overall and far more in the way of diversity. *Lylat Wars* had 16 different levels in all, Namco's sequel boasts just 10 – none of which are as solidly designed, or display as much in the way of clever touches and set pieces. As a result it feels as though not as much love has been lavished on it.

Not that you'd guess it from the game's opening stage, mind you. Initial impressions are pretty good as it's all recognisably *Starfox*. The opening space sequence places you in Fox's Arwing which controls comfortably and retains all the features of it's forbearers – with a chargeable lock-on shot and boost for manoeuvres. There's no change in the power-ups either. Rings increase your shields, bombs deliver a high-powered blast radius and the laser power-up

"FULL ACTIVITY WITH WAVES OF ENEMY FIGHTERS AND A GORGEOUS STARSCAPE…"



FADE IN

The pop-up really wound us up. It's especially noticeable when you're in the Arwing. This is even more irritating when there are enemies attacking your comrades, as you often have to cross half the level before they're visible – which can be very annoying if you're going for the award that requires your team-mate's survival.



△ Pigma makes a come back. Briefly.

increases your firepower to double shot and, eventually, super-powered 'fat' blue lasers, as well as repairing any wing damage you've suffered in battle.

You'd be forgiven for being lulled into a false sense of security. Visually, it's mildly striking – at least in so far as it looks busy, shiny and slick enough. The opening battle is full of activity, with waves of enemy fighters, a gorgeous starscape and huge capital ships, which the on-rails action is kind enough to have you swooping gracefully past. The second section of the level isn't too shabby either – another gentle on-rails blast down a quite pretty (if unremarkable) green valley taking out air and ground forces. Just what the doctor ordered?

FLAGGING

There are flags hidden in each level. These can be found by destroying enemies, hitting specific targets or discovering them. Finding them all is pretty tough – which means playing and replaying all the levels. But some of the levels are so weak, you'll struggle to motivate yourself to find them and the reward is hardly worth it...

Well... no. You see, as nice as it is, it's all strangely unexciting. Weak and limp-wristed, there's no kind of 'oomph' to it. Gone are the meaty, throbbing pulses of light you used to receive when your lasers made damaging contact with the enemy, for example. By the time you reach the Andross-like boss at the level's end, it's hard not to feel as though something's not quite right here...

Starfox and co have never been the most charismatic characters as it is, but here they truly plumb new depths of rubbishness. The voice work is simply revolting for starters. The enemies are nondescript and the locations are uninspired, making you care less about the 'story' or the team's plight than you ever did. These are all little presentational niggles that make the difference between an impeccably produced game, and one that feels just a little rushed and disjointed. Unfortunately, these annoyances continue throughout.

Visual detail is disappointingly low throughout. Textures are flat and give the game little in the way of character (put it side by side with something like *Panzer Dragoon Orta* on the Xbox and you'll see what we

△ Destroying static targets isn't exactly 'fun', is it?

△ This is a bit of a rip-off of a *Lylat Wars* level. Which explains why it's so good…

mean) and the depressing blandness of it all makes it seem somehow simpler, less epic than its predecessors.

The biggest problem we have with *Starfox* though, is its move away from the traditional on-rails flying levels towards the less exciting on-foot, and tank sections. *Assault* is at its best when you're in the Arwing – there's no doubt about that. It looks better, it feels better and, while never really reaching the giddy heights of *Lylat Wars* in terms of sheer excitement, plays better. It's pretty sad then, that these superior parts of the game don't even make up half the overall experience.

The on-foot and tank sections, despite controlling well enough, offer nothing more than point-to-

COMBOING

Assault has a combo system. You still get kill bonuses for taking down specific packs of enemies, but there's now a combo meter to take into account. When you kill an enemy, you have a brief period of time to make another kill, and then another and so on. The more kills you get in quick succession, the higher your combo and the higher the bonuses at the end.



△ The Aparoids are assimilating all that is good and true. So Slippy's safe at least…



△ Keep killing in quick succession and your combo will build up for those crucial bonuses.



△ There are times when the game can look quite striking. Shame they're in the minority.

DINOSAUR PLANET

Just when you thought you were rid of the place…



Planet Sauria is home to Krystal and Prince Tricky – and is one of the nicest-looking levels in the game. It's been attacked by the Aparoids (the main enemy in Assault) who are assimilating the universe's wildlife, a bit like the Borg.



You start the level on foot, with the job of finding specific targets called Hatchers. These are little pods hidden away in the level, which are spawning all the enemies. The radar in the bottom right shows you where they all are.



All the Hatchers are on the ground – but how you destroy them is entirely up to you. There's a Landmaster and Arwing nearby if you want to use them, but some Hatchers can only be found when you're on foot.



In the corner of the screen there's a meter that fills up as more and more airborne Aparoid invasion forces arrive. If the gauge gets too full, then your comrades are outnumbered. At which point you'll have to bail them out.



This is easier said than done if you're underground. If you get a call for help, it's a race against time to get to your Arwing – which is extremely annoying if you're in the middle of racking up a huge combo.



It's a system that shows a lot of promise, but it's not well executed. The lie of the land, for example, makes using the cumbersome Landmaster pretty pointless. Also, the Arwing highlights some of the game engine's flaws, like the fade-in…

point target hunts – and while the added diversity is certainly welcome, they simply don't generate enough of a thrill. In a couple of these stages for example, the overall levels lack focus. There's too much dead space to traverse and the abundance of weapon types, while nice in theory, don't really serve enough of a purpose (we hardly ever used the sniper rifle or grenades for example, because they simply weren't practical). The result is a collection of levels that lack the sense of arcade-like purity and tight, considered design (particularly in terms of enemy placement or the timing of attacking waves) that the series demands.

This wouldn't really be so much of a problem if replaying levels wasn't such an integral part of the experience. In order to earn all the co-pilot survival badges, medal awards and special flags you'll have to replay the levels again and again. Now, this isn't quite so bad for the Arwing levels, but you'll balk at the prospect of having to replay the tank and on-foot sections time and again…

So it comes down to the multi-player to deliver any long-lasting entertainment – and, truth be known, it's actually very enjoyable. The simple visuals of the main game help it maintain clarity and a decent frame rate in split-screen – even through the most hectic battles – and those 'stupid' weapons that you largely ignored in single player finally find their place – proving very useful in balancing the multi-player skirmishes. So maybe there's some consolation to found there after all – but, unfortunately it's simply a case of too little, too late…

GERAINT EVANS

> **"THE LEVELS LACK THE SENSE OF ARCADE-LIKE PURITY THAT THE SERIES DEMANDS…"**



RETRO

If you can bring yourself to replay the game's more tedious levels, you'll find plent of extras to uncover – in particular a collection of Namco's old arcade games. So far we've uncovered three, Xevious (pictured) as well as the lesser known Battle City and Starluster. Hooray! As no one in particular might say.



- Looks nice enough.
- Enjoyable Arwing missions.
- Great multiplayer.



- Only lasts a couple of days.
- Poor overall presentation.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

P.N. 03
Capcom
NGC/84, 77%
A flawed but stylish shooter. This is a better game than *Starfox Assault.*





6 VISUALS
Doesn't look too bad – but should have been much better.



6 SOUNDS
Bad voices and effects, saved only by the upbeat music.



6 MASTERY
It doesn't excel, with mediocre level design and presentation.

7 LIFESPAN
You'll beat story mode in a week on all difficulties.

VERDICT

An average shooter that struggles to impress on any level. Disappointing, but not exactly heartbreaking.



NGC 73

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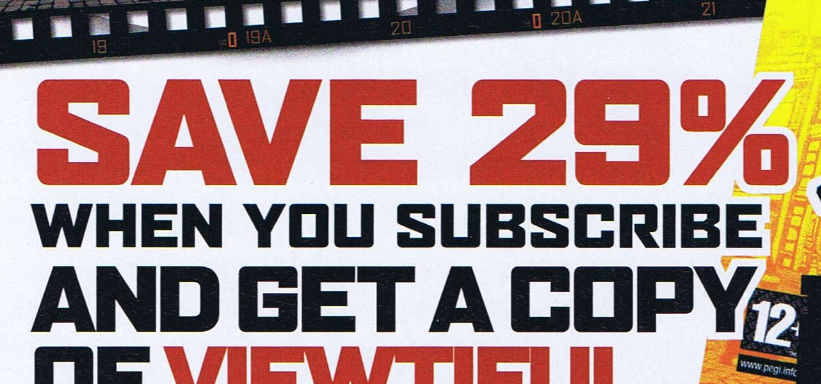
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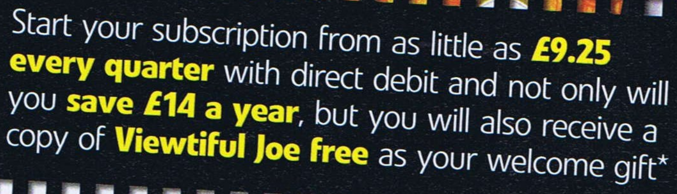
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EXTENDED PLAY

RESIDENT EVIL 4



So You Want to Shoot Monsters?

You can use a host of adjectives to describe *Resident Evil 4*, but foremost among them is "difficult". This is not an easy game; in point of fact, it may be the hardest of any title in the series to date. A lot of the game's challenges come down to reflexes, practice, tactics and sheer dogged persistence. This month, NGC intends to teach you about how to play *Resi 4*, to prepare you for next month's release. If you're still having trouble next month, we'll help you through the toughest battles.



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

This is the first installment of our Resident Evil 4 guide, here we tell you the basics; good ways of disposing of enemies, what weapons to use, when to use them, what to upgrade and the locations of all the herbs and treasure. And, like a fine wine, it'll only get better...



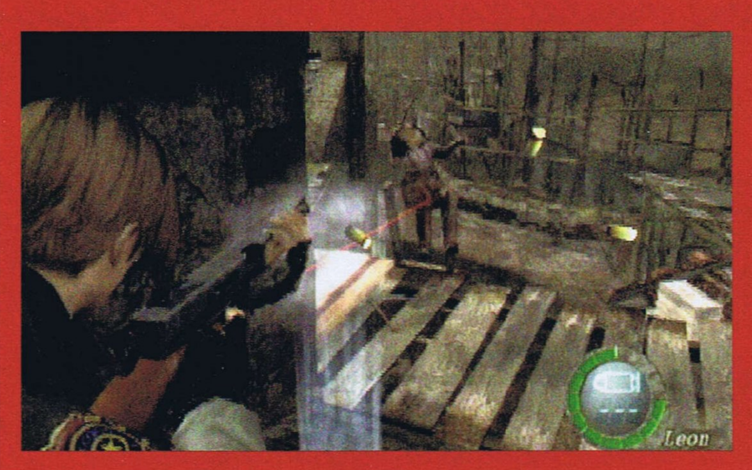
WHAT WE SAID IN ISSUE 104!

The complete package easily matches Gamecube's top tier of games. It's as well produced as* Wind Waker *and* Metroid Prime *– and stands alongside both of them as the finest examples of entertainment the Gamecube can provide.



TACTICS

The best way to show them who's boss



Resi 4 is all about the use and control of space. Surviving an encounter is about finding a defendable position and occupying it against all comers, using whatever tools you have handy.

The first rule will come as a surprise to *Resi* masters: your equipment is there to be used. You're no longer forced to hoard ammunition in preparation for some anticipated future catastrophe. It's not a bad idea to keep some weapons in reserve, such as the sniper rifle, but you should be burning through handgun and shotgun ammo at a mad clip. Shoot all you want; you will find more.

The second rule is to find your position. An ideal location is one that has no other points of entry, such as a closet or dead-end hallway. This forces the enemy to approach you with no room to manoeuvre, which makes them shotgun fodder. In situations where you can't make this choice, you can either put your back to a corner or use incendiary grenades to temporarily close off a route of approach.

ASHLEY

You'll spend roughly a quarter of the game with Ashley in tow. She's got enough sense that she's rarely a problem, but she has a knack for getting killed in crossfires, especially if explosives are involved. You can use the X button to park her somewhere safe.

LADDER-FU

An enemy who takes damage while on a ladder will generally fall off of it, taking a small amount of damage upon landing. If you adopt a perch near the top of a ladder, Ganados will obediently climb up into your sights.

WATER-SOLUBLE

A Ganado who falls into water or lava will never be seen again. Exploit this.

EXPLODO!

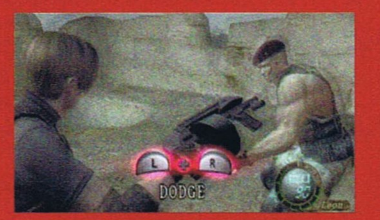
Those old chestnuts oil drums, red barrels and oxygen tanks will explode if shot. Use them whenever possible. You can often thin out the enemy's ranks this way; the Ganados have not realized that tanks of volatile accelerants makes for poor cover.

LIVE BAIT

Many enemies are more interested in Ashley than Leon. You can often use her to set an ambush; wait for enemies to grab her, then take them off at the knees. Just be careful not to shoot her, as Ashley dies instantly if Leon damages her in any way.

SIT DOWN AND WATCH THE MOVIE

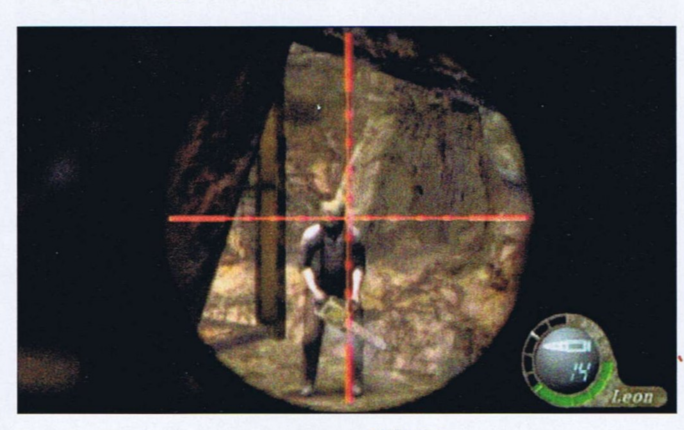
Animated sequences in *Resi 4* may require your participation. Whenever a movie starts, watch it with your fingers on the A, B, L, and R buttons, in case a quick time event comes up.





JUSTICE TO BAD PEOPLE

Bringing the pain in the new old fashioned way



It wouldn't be *Resi* if you weren't outnumbered by monsters, and in *Resi 4*, each type of enemy requires an adjustment to your tactics.

GANADOS AND ILLUMINADOS
These are the most frequently encountered enemy. Ganados (and their clerical cousins, Los Illuminados) have a knack for surrounding you. Survival against them requires you to find a way to neutralize their major advantage: numbers. A typical Ganado encounter sees you outnumbered five to one, bare minimum. A shotgun helps, so does forcing them into a bottleneck. Starting in chapter 2, start watching Ganados' faces. If one has red eyes, do not shoot him in the head. This will result in unpleasantness.

EXPLOIT THE DYNAMITE MONKEY
You'll frequently encounter villagers who toss lit sticks of dynamite. These morons are more dangerous to their friends than you. Leon can weather an explosion unharmed unless he's at ground zero. You can detonate TNT early by shooting it out of the air. A better tactic is to kill the Ganado while a lit stick of dynamite is in his hand. It'll explode, sending his friends flying.

THE LONELY DEATH OF CROSSBOW MONKEY
Once you reach the castle, Ganados will be supported by crossbowmen. Each can fire twice before reloading and they're not great at tracking a moving target. Take them out first.

ON THE WRESTLING CIRCUIT
To save ammo, use Leon's melee attacks. Stun an enemy and you can launch a vicious kick; if you kneecap Illuminados or mercenary Ganados, Leon will crush their skulls with a powerful suplex. Although ammo is plentiful, it's still good fun.

SENSIBLE HEADGEAR
A Ganado wearing a facemask or knight's helmet is immune to headshots, so be wary.

THIS IS WHY FEUDALISM IS OVER
A Ganado carrying a shield can, unconveniently enough, block several gunshots. To deal with him, destroy the shield with a shotgun blast or use high velocity penetrative weapons, such as the Magnum, to blast a hole through both him and his damn shield. That'll teach the gits…

MAKE STABBY
Don't waste bullets on a lone Ganado. Knock him down and stab him while he's on the ground. Unfair? Yes, but his friends are coming and they're a dozen strong. Get to slashing.

HARD ENTRY
Double-tap the A button to kick a door open. You'll stun any enemy who's hit by the flying door.

USE YOUR EARS
In many parts of the game, enemies' presence is accompanied by tense music. Once the last enemy in an area is dead, the music will stop. The exceptions are the Illuminados. They have no theme music, but they're constantly chanting.

BEAR TRAPS
Watch the ground for steel-jawed traps set by the Ganados. You can deactivate them with a bullet.

TRIPWIRES
These crude booby traps are occasionally hard to spot. They can be lethal if you're already injured. A fun trick is to lure Ganados into the tripwire, vaporizing them.

BAGHEAD
This chainsaw-wielding Ganado comes in male and female versions. They have two things in common: they are very hard to kill and if they make contact, Leon dies.

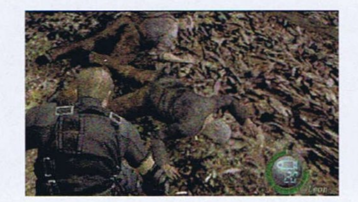
Ideally, you'll want to take Baghead out from extremely long range. If this isn't an option, keep him on his back with shotgun or Magnum blasts.

NOVISTADORS
Each encounter with these chameleon/cockroach crossbreeds is cause for profanity. If they're invisible, look for subtle visual cues such as dripping ichor or splashes in standing water, pull out a shotgun and make them dead. Later, Novistadors sprout wings and adopt the locust-like tactic of rushing you down. Again: shotgun. There is no problem in *Resi 4* that cannot be solved, directly or indirectly, by a barrage of buckshot.

DOGS
These infected wolfhounds are very fast, but they don't show up often. If you hear one, put your back to a wall and fire in the dogs' general direction. A handy note: if you hear one, there are at least two.

REGENERATORS
Regenerators are slow, and you'll often be able to use the terrain against them (i.e. closed doors). After your first encounter with one, you'll find an infrared scope; attach it to your rifle and you'll be able to see and shoot the Regenerator's life-giving parasites. A bit later, you'll run into the Iron Maidens, tougher Regenerators with spikes. Do not get close to them under any circumstances. Also, at least one parasite will be on its back, blow off one of its legs, then nail the parasite while the Maiden's on its belly.







OPENING THE TOYBOX

There's a whole world of weaponry to play with...



In *Resi 4*, you'll get most of your arsenal from friendly merchants. These mysterious men will pop up throughout your adventure, offering you dangerous weapons at reasonable prices. Each weapon you obtain can be upgraded by a merchant for a fee. If you max out all the weapon's statistics, you can often purchase an exclusive tune-up that'll grant the gun a power-up or new feature. Here, we'll talk about each weapon's uses, and whether they're worth upgrading.

HANDGUN

You'll find a ton of ammunition for your trusty pistol, but it's rarely worth using in combat. If you do, make use of enemies' hit zones; disarm them, kneecap them and double-tap them while they're down. You can buy four pistols on your first run through the game, two of which are noteworthy. The Blacktail is the most powerful, but the simple handgun's Exclusive upgrade raises its critical hit-rate through the roof. The choice is yours.

SHOTGUN

This is your best friend. A shotgun is an invaluable tool for crowd control. It also sees frequent use against bosses, who often have small, hard-to-hit weak points that no other weapon can easily reach. Upgrade to the Striker as fast as possible, then tune up its firepower and capacity every chance you get. Having a powerful shotgun will make Chapter 5 much easier.

RIFLE

The semi-auto doesn't lose your sight picture between shots, which makes it a must-have. The rifle's a lot of fun to play with, but you should always keep its clip full; you'll need it to win several battles. The scope's nice, but you don't need it.

MAGNUM

The Broken Butterfly is better in the long run than the Killer7; when upgraded, it has the edge on sheer firepower. You should keep one around at all times for powerful standard enemies like Baghead, but unless you're a career marksman, it's often hard to use the Magnum against bosses.

TMP

Frankly, it's not worth it unless you have a full-auto fetish. If you bother using this, get the stock version. Otherwise, it's ridiculously inaccurate at any range other than point-blank.

MINE LAUNCHER

Many enemies' only tactic is to rush at you. The mine launcher fixes a dart to an enemy, which will explode in a few seconds. You may see the problem. The best use of the mine launcher is to shoot someone, then use handgun fire to keep him in place until he explodes. It's fun and offers devious possibilities, but it's often more trouble than it's worth.









ROCKET LAUNCHER

This is a powerful weapon, and is one shot, one kill (usually). The rocket launcher can make several boss fights very short. Once you hit the castle, try to keep 30,000 pesetas in reserve for ammo just in case you find yourself needing one.

THE CAPACITY TRICK

If you upgrade a weapon's magazine capacity, the merchant will throw in a full clip absolutely free. This is a great way to get rare ammo, such as Magnum shells.

FLASH GRENADES

Enemies whore hit with a flash grenade are temporarily blinded. You can run up and kick them, or simply make your escape. The flash also instantly kills parasites.

INCENDIARY GRENADES

This creates a short-lived patch of burning ground that will incinerate anyone in the area. It doesn't do a lot of damage, but it's good for covering a retreat or, as noted above, preventing enemies from approaching you.

HAND GRENADES

What do you want here - rocket science? Go blow someone up!

WATCH THE LASER

Most of your weapons are equipped with a laser sight. The laser will draw a dot on any target that can be affected by gunfire, such as breakable objects or enemies. If you watch for the dot, it can save you some guesswork.



MIGHT AS WELL STEAL THE SILVERWARE

It's all for the taking, but it's worth nothing incomplete...





You'll need serious money to use the merchant's services. To earn it, you'll need to hunt for treasure. Invest in the merchant's maps, as they'll pay for themselves. Treasures are useless except for their cash value, so you should sell them whenever you get the chance. The exceptions are incomplete treasure items. Some have been vandalized and will sell for far more if you find their missing pieces. For example, the beerstein's only worth 3,000 pesetas, but if you replace all its catseyes, it'll sell for 20,000. Check out this list, numbers indicate the chapter in which an item is found.

BEERSTEIN (20,000)

Hidden in a fenced-off enclosure in the Farm in 1-1. You will need to drop down into it from the hayloft's balcony.
Red Catseye: only available in 1-1, this is hidden in a bird's nest outside the house past the Farm. Shoot it down.
Yellow Catseye: at the bottom of the ski lift in 2-3, at the end of the tunnel in the cliff-face.
Green Catseye: solve the puzzle behind the church in 1-3.

ELEGANT MASK (20,000)

In plain sight in 1-2; you'll need to break a window to reach it. Another's available in 3-2, on the balcony of the ballroom, accessible via chandelier.
Red Gem: in 2-2, hidden on El Gigante's turf and inside a treasure chest in 3-2's hedge maze.
Purple Gem: above the huts in 1-3, in the arena where you fight El Gigante; another is atop a statue in 4-1, in plain sight.
Green Gem: in 2-3, after you meet Salazar, check the ceiling.

BUTTERFLY LAMP (20,000)

In the sewer control room in 3-2, the lamp can be repaired with eyes. These are dropped by dead Novistadors. Green and red eyes are quite common, but you usually won't find a blue eye until chapter four.

SALAZAR FAMILY CROWN (48,000)

The crown is held by a dead monk at the bottom of the pit in 4-1; subsequently, destroy Salazar's "right hand" for the crown jewel. The royal insignia is on a lift in 4-2; you can't miss it.





GOLDEN LYNX (35,000)

The lynx is inside a treasure chest in 5-1, at a dead end in the tunnel network at the top of the cliffs.
Red Stone of Faith: in a suitcase in the research facility's commissary in 5-1.
Green Stone of Judgement: in the last room of 5-1, in a suitcase near the merchant.
Blue Stone of Treason: in 5-3, in a side tunnel near the merchant's shooting gallery.

WE HATESES SHINY THINGS

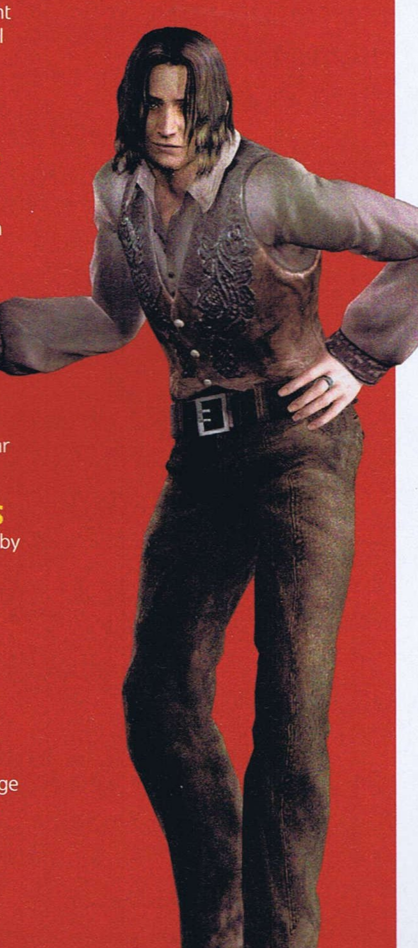
Anything glittery is valuable. Free it by shooting it, then grab it to fund your mayhem.

A SERVANT OF THE CLASSICS

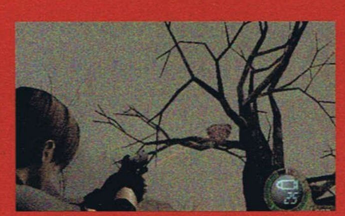
In the castle, check behind the portraits of this guy for cash prizes.

KILLING IN THE NAME OF

You'll find that the crows in the village are carrying some useful items, like cash and... um... grenades.







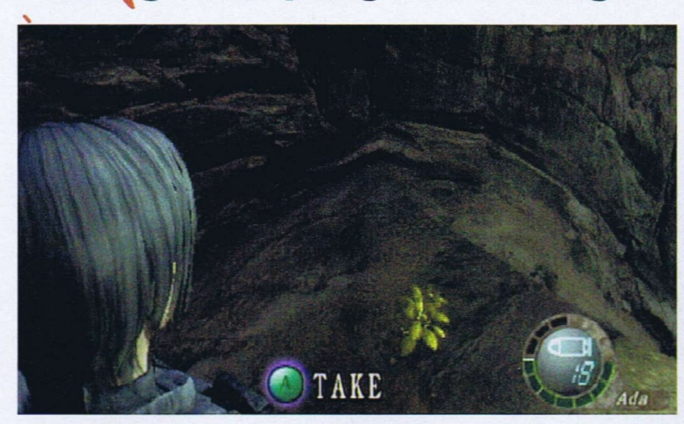






EAT YOUR VEGETABLES

You'll grow up big and strong...





There are 27 yellow herbs hidden throughout the game. When mixed with a green herb, these increase Leon or Ashley's maximum health.

CHAPTER 1-1
Inside the crate in the southwestern corner of the village.

CHAPTER 1-2
In a cabin near the door locked with the emblem, inside a locker.

CHAPTER 1-3
In a box inside one of the cabins on the lake shore.

CHAPTER 2-1
On a wagon in the arena where you fight El Gigante.

CHAPTER 2-2
In a bookshelf in the cabin where you and Luis make your stand.

CHAPTER 2-3
In the burning barn's hayloft.

CHAPTER 3-1
On the ramparts of the castle, inside the small storage room near the southernmost catapult.

CHAPTER 3-1
In one of the crates near the prison key.

CHAPTER 3-2
In one of the cells in the sewer.

CHAPTER 3-2
At the start of the gallery ambush, turn right and run upstairs. It's in the corner of the first landing.

CHAPTER 3-2
In the southwestern corner of the hedge maze

CHAPTER 3-4
As Ashley, check the corner of the first room.

CHAPTER 4-1
On the same table as the file called 'Sample Retrieved'.

CHAPTER 4-1
At the bottom of the pit, near the merchant.

CHAPTER 4-3
Near the key to the mine.

CHAPTER 4-3
At the base of the final tower, hidden behind a stack of boxes.

CHAPTER 5-1
In a crate in the facility's commissary. It's hard to spot.

CHAPTER 5-1
On the desk in the waste disposal office.

CHAPTER 5-1
In a barrel near the merchant at the base of the radio tower.

CHAPTER 5-2
Just after the stuck shutter in the waste disposal facility, on the floor.

CHAPTER 5-2
Near the typewriter in the room before the loading dock.

CHAPTER 5-3
This is in a small alcove, behind a broken mesh fence near the transportation modules.

CHAPTER 5-3
In the Ganados' camp, by the sealed gate.

CHAPTER 5-4
At the base of the first guard tower, inside a crate.

CHAPTER 5-4
In the old prison's coat closet, near the typewriter. It's easy to overlook in the dark.

CHAPTER 5-4
Inside a barrel in the old prison's exercise yard.

FINAL CHAPTER
In plain sight near the file called 'Our Plan'.





INFINITE MAYHEM

There's so much more to it!



When you've completed *Resident Evil 4*, there's still so much more to do and som many more secrets to unlock. Unlike some games, however, they're all worthwhile, it's not just a case of a movie or some artwork, there's some serious firepower on offer here…

TARGET PRACTICE

At four spots throughout the game, a merchant will be standing next to a door marked with twin pistols. This is an entrance to the shooting gallery, where you can earn prizes such as decorative bottlecaps. The real value in target practice is monetary; every time you complete a row in your bottlecap collection, the merchant will give you a cash prize.

MERCENARIES AND ASSIGNMENT: ADA

Simply beating the game opens up these new modes. Assignment: Ada puts you in control of Ada Wong, during one of her frequent absences from the main storyline, as she attacks the Ganados' island facility. Mercenaries is a combat-based mini-game where you take out as many Ganados as possible within a set time limit.

ALTERNATIVE OUTFITS

On your second play through, you can opt for special costumes. Leon will don his RPD togs from *RE2*, Ada will exchange her dress for the black spy garb from her mini-game, and Ashley will… well, she'll get tarted up.



INFINITE LAUNCHER

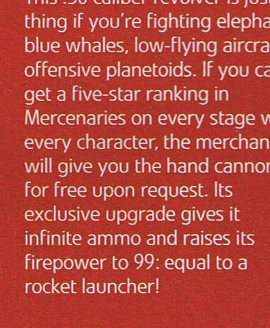
Defeat the story mode and the merchant will begin offering a rocket launcher with infinite ammunition for a cool 1,000,000 pesetas.

CHICAGO TYPEWRITER

This heavy machine gun has infinite ammo. Beat Assignment: Ada, and the merchant will sell you the typewriter for 1,000,000 pesetas. It's worth it.

HAND CANNON

This .50 caliber revolver is just the thing if you're fighting elephants, blue whales, low-flying aircraft, or offensive planetoids. If you can get a five-star ranking in Mercenaries on every stage with every character, the merchant will give you the hand cannon for free upon request. Its exclusive upgrade gives it infinite ammo and raises its firepower to 99: equal to a rocket launcher!







NGC GUARANTEE
TIPS, CHEATS
PROBLEMS SOLVED
EVERYTHING
YOU NEED!

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...

TIPS EXTRA



MARIO POWER TENNIS

EVENT MODE
Hold Z, then press start at the title screen.

ACE DIFFICULTY
Win the Planet Cup tournaments in singles or doubles mode.

STAR CUP
Win all three of the Normal Cup tournaments.

MOONLIGHT CUP
Win all the Rainbow Cup tournaments.

BOWSER COURT
Win the Special Cup Fire tournament in singles mode.

MARIO BROS. COURT
Win the Special Cup Lightning tournament in doubles mode.

FLY GUY
Win the Mushroom, Flower and Star Cup in singles mode.

SHY GUY
Win all three Normal Cup tournaments in singles mode.

PARATROOPA
Win all three Normal Cup tournaments in doubles mode.

PETEY PIRANHA
Win the Special Cup Fire and Lightning tournaments in doubles mode.



WRIGGLER
Win the Special Cup Fire and Lightning tournaments in singles mode.

BALLOON PANIC MINI-GAME
Win the Flower Cup tournaments in singles mode.

COIN COLLECTORS MINI-GAME
Win the Mushroom Cup tournaments in singles mode.

MECHA BOWSER MAYHEM MINI-GAME
Win the Mushroom Cup tournaments in singles mode.

STAR FOR CHARACTER
Win all three Normal Cup tournaments with a character to unlock his or her star version.

TALES OF SYMPHONIA

COMPLETION BONUSES:
Complete and save the game, then reload the game file. The Game Record, Sound Test and Mania options will be unlocked at the title screen.

GRADE SHOP PURCHASES:
To unlock the Grade Shop, complete the game and save when prompted. Start the game again using the cleared game file, insert disc one and go shopping!

CARRY UP TO 30 ITEMS: 500 GRADE
EXP X 1/2: 10 GRADE
EXP X 10: 3000 GRADE
EXP X 2: 1000 GRADE
GET MORE BONUS EXP FROM COMBOS: 50 GRADE
RAISE RELATIONSHIPS: 100 GRADE
RECEIVE MORE GRADE AFTER BATTLE: 100 GRADE
START GAME WITH 500 MORE HP: 250 GRADE
START WITH 160 HP AT THE BEGINNING OF A BATTLE: 10 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER COLLECTOR'S ENCYCLOPAEDIA DATA: 10 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER WORLD MAP DATA: 10 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER ALL SPELLS/TECHS: 1000 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER BATTLE STRATEGY DATA: 10 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER CHARACTER COLLECTION: 10 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER COOKING SKILLS: 50 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER EX GEMS (INVENTORY): 600 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER EX SKILLS (EQUIPPED): 400 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER GALD: 1000 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER MEMORY GEMS: 20 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER MINI-GAME DATA: 10 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER MONSTER ENCYCLOPAEDIA DATA: 10 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER PLAY TIME: 10 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER RECIPES: 50 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER RELATIONSHIPS: 10 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER THE NUMBER OF TIMES YOU USED CERTAIN SPELLS/TECHS: 25 GRADE
TRANSFER OVER TITLES: 1000 GRADE

MARIO PARTY 6

PLAY AS TOADETTE
Put 30 stars in the Star Bank.

CLOCKWORK CASTLE BOARD
Put 100 stars in the Star Bank.

DROP BLOCKS
Say "Zero" to drop blocks on enemies.

VERBAL ASSAULT CHARACTER APPEARANCES
Say these names and the character or object will pop out.

Brighton
Bullet Bill
Cheep Cheep
Fly Guy
Gears
Goomba
Nuts
Twila

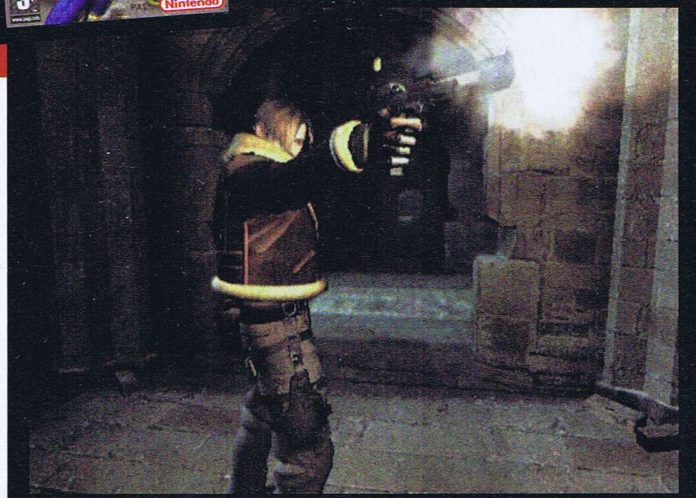
NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!
In Metroid Prime 2: Echoes, remember that when fighting the Boost Guardian it's essential to lay plenty of bombs when he's in his liquid form; the detonations will force him to coalesce.
Francis White, Durham





READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Can you out-tip Tips Extra? Send in your hint-tastic helps and we'll 'sort out' the top tipster with a mystery prize from Geraint's 'special drawer'. Chances are, it'll be a game.



1. RESIDENT EVIL 4

A Breed Apart

Before you fight Del Lago at the lake, save the game in the cabin by the dock and go to the end of the pier, but don't get in the boat, shoot the water or throw a grenade in for a nasty surprise…

Wilf DeLorean, Edinburgh

2. F ZERO GX

Spin Dizzy

Choose a light machine and go to Port Town's Aero Dive. Set the car to maximum acceleration and, when you get to the big drop in the middle of the track, hold either L and left or R and right (on the stick). You'll spin upwards. Once you're high enough, you can dive your way back for some incredible max speeds.

Vanessa Yeung, Reading

3. HARVEST MOON: FRIENDS OF MINERAL TOWN

Time Saver

Put items in the bin in the barn or chicken coop – you can save up to an hour a day as time stops when you're in buildings.

Daniel Scott, Perth

4. PAPER MARIO 2: THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR

Palmistry

To get your fortune told for free go to Rogueport Sewers and save at the block outside the warp pipe. Visit the fortune-teller, write down what she says, then reset your Gamecube!

Aranpreet Banghal, email

5. LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP

Rupee Reaper

Once you have the Mole Mitts, go to Link's house and dig the ground to the left of the door to find a red rupee. Enter then exit the house and the red rupee will return!

David Hoyes, North Ferriby

6. METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES

Buzz off

Use the Sonic Boom on a swarm of War Wasps and the place will be flooded with ammo.

Jonathan Trier Brikner, Denmark

7. PAPER MARIO 2: THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR

Fuzzy Logic

Find yourself a green Fuzzy and fight him; wait until he's multiplied a couple of times, defeat one or two, make him multiply again and continue until 100 star points, then kill 'em all!

Gilles Reuse, Belgium

8. MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH

Balloon Fight

In multiplayer mode on Balloon Battle, if you're low on balloons, boost into anyone or ram someone with a star. Doing that will steal an opponent's balloons.

Henry Stockdale, email

9. DONKEY KONGA

Jungle Roar

On Donkey Konga, clapping can be registered by short, sharp shouts.

David Lonerhan, email

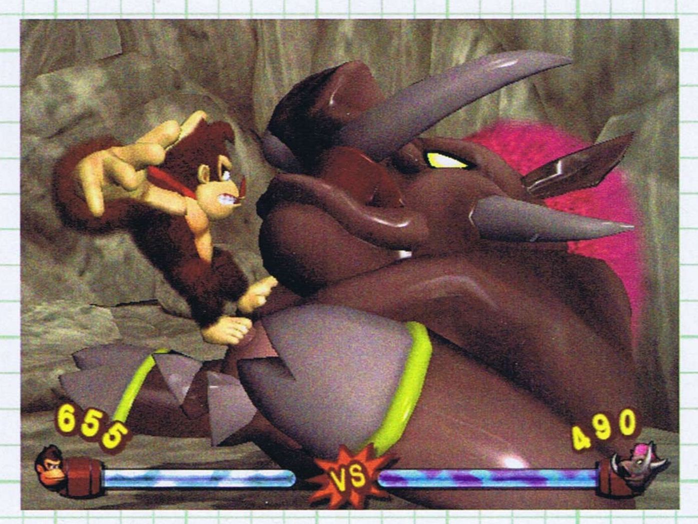
10. THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

Dudley Do-Right

To get through Dudley's party, go to his house and order a pizza. Make sure there are enough chairs for everyone. Go to Joanne's gym; eat and play the console. Talk to each person. You'll win a car!

Colm Laverty, County Armagh





Beware Dr. Kitts' surgical implements of DOOM! And his big-ass shotgun.

Dr. Kitts,

I'm very much enjoying *Paper Mario 2* at the moment, so much in fact that even though I've got *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat* and *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* to play they're still in the cellophane as I can't get enough 2D RPG lovin'. Mmm-mm. Anyway, enough of that – there's a green rat in the harbour area that wants me to give him some coins. What happens if I do this? Is there any point to it?

Darren Green, Morecambe

Dr. Kitts throws a puppy and some bricks into a sack, and asks the taxi driver to take him to the canal.

Yes indeed, there is a point to the annoying green rodent. If memory serves correctly, he asks for the cash quite early on in the game, but if you've got the amount he's asking for that early on it's a wise investment, as later on he'll repay you three times the amount. And that's not bad at all, is it?

Dr. Kitts

Right, I'm just getting into *Animal Crossing* and very nice it is too. Very pleasant indeed, I can just spend hours wiling away my time, cleaning up the village and making friends with my neighbours. It's just like real life! Except that in real life I'm hideously ugly and have no friends. Ah well, never mind, eh? Anyway, I was wondering what all the insect catching is about. I don't even have a net yet!

Kerry Wicks, Frinton

Dr. Kitts pulls the wings off a fly then introduces it to a spider, while he snickers in a disconcerting fashion, thusly: 'ni-ni-ni-ni-ni'.

Well, Kerry, you're obviously not doing a terribly good job of playing the game properly as the bug-catching net is one of the first things that you can get in the game. That dreadful slavemaster Tom Nook will have one for sale early on; you've just got to be able to afford it. Otherwise, well, bug catching is simply just a bit of a meaningless diversion - catch all 40 types of bug and you get a fancy gold net, which does nothing other than denote that you've caught all the bugs. Pfft. But if you really need a tip or two, learn how to sneak and bear in mind that insects are more plentiful in summer and 'fall', which, as any right-thinking person knows, should actually be called 'autumn'. Goodbye, children...



Got an Action Replay? Whack these codes into it...





TALES OF SYMPHONIA

Master Code
29DT-QM1W-B7FPY
WYET-JQU0-MVBR7

Infinite Gald
NU45-WNBQ-J64F4
GND2-YJ6F-9ED0C

Infinite Grade
QW6U-BBC5-8BXF0
TWV4-808D-PC1JJ

Max Encounters
2VJB-ZXNA-AX59Q
KCR5-0BUQ-1ZMH4

Max Combo
8YDM-H31J-01KR4
WBA0-6UYD-BX4E7

Less Random Encounters
171C-5AM7-75UZ1
H6JB-K02A-WQX1D

More Random Encounters
0AAJ-1QYN-0REAB
AE3V-WTRU-352C7

Get Tons of Items and Weapons
1K3R-N3Y8-V1597
W0YY-3D5P-TJX5A
DC8W-15EW-1728M

Get Tons of Items and Weapons
1K3R-N3Y8-V1597
W0YY-3D5P-TJX5A
DC8W-15EW-1728M

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2004-2005

Master Code
TCUH-R6Y2-7KUMC
6H26-ZHCM-96X2T

Player 1 Scores 99
HFFU-2YGU-4TD26
RVGM-7U0C-1ZDYH
738H-08P2-HR2ZD
DD64-CVMN-6EG4U
XCPN-QJA2-N2PEN

Player 1 Scores 0
4AZM-AFCF-VGTUT
RVGM-7U0C-1ZDYH
3H1G-2ZH8-4YQTG
DD64-CVMN-6EG4U
8HWQ-078D-7ZXF2

Player 2 Scores 99
XMWX-J6X2-0ZXGX
JZ7Q-AXKB-XANXU
738H-08P2-HR2ZD
ZG0Y-7XQW-D27ZF
XCPN-QJA2-N2PEN

Player 2 Scores 0
Y771-BDFM-G085U
JZ7Q-AXKB-XANXU
3H1G-2ZH8-4YQTG
ZG0Y-7XQW-D27ZF
8HWQ-078D-7ZXF2

Freeze Timer (Z + D-pad left)
KX6M-M2QN-J66K0
0EE1-7BVM-DEW99
51FD-89DG-V1TG9

Enable Timer (Z + D-pad right)
CFD8-E7UF-BQBBM
F4CT-V8UM-JTX19
QZZ0-9EKF-R1GA3

Unlock Everything
7WC3-JPFQ-J6KGW
ZZ1G-BJEK-69AKR

NGC YOUR TOP TIPS

YOUR TOP TIPS SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND BAG YOURSELF A PRIZE...

Found an interesting tip, secret or quirk in one of your games? Send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. If yours is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a cool prize. Good, huh? Just don't send us cheat codes from the 'net...

HERE'S MY TOP TIP...

IT'S FOR

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS

Name ....

Address ....

.... Postcode ....

Send to:
TIPS EXTRA, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
or e-mail ngc@futurenet.co.uk

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy instead, and continue on another bit of paper if you run out of room. Or just buy two copies of the mag. That way you can keep a spare copy in the khazi, to help focus your mind.

namco

tune it up and turn it loose.

SRS

STREET RACING SYNDICATE™

Race for cash, respect and babes

in the ultimate winner takes all street race

Details

Name Courtney

Stats 34-25-35

Height 5'7" Weight 115lbs

Info When Courtney is not modelling, she loves spending time in her own tricked out ride.

Date Girl Videos

No. of Girls 18/18

VeilSide

POLICE

505 BHP

324 BHP



Out Now



SKILL CLUB 2005

It's kind of like that film The Wizard. But with less Fred Savage...



Oh yes, it's time for some more brain-achingly tough challenges that will not only separate the men from the boys, but are so powerfully unreasonable that they have the ability to sink submarines 30,000 leagues under the sea from the other side of the world. Think we're joking? How many submarines have you seen lately? If you think you're tough enough to beat some of the hardest challenges around, then get to it, hook up your VCR, get playing and get recording.

How It Works

We've conjured up a bunch of tricky challenges, and you can tackle any or all of them that you like. If you complete three, you'll gain a place in the Bronze league; complete seven, and you'll be honoured with a placing in the Silver league. Ten challenges completed means you'll be entered into the Gold league, and a mighty 14 proves that you're the best of the best and are worthy of entry to the Platinum league. You'll get a certificate for each league that you place in, and if you somehow manage to beat all 20 challenges you'll get a special Skill Club Guru award and certificate, plus something nice that we've got lying around. So what are you waiting for?

THE RULES

- **Three completed challenges earns a Bronze placing; seven a Silver, 10 a Gold, and 14 a Platinum.**
- **You can enter any challenges you like.**
- ***Each challenge must be accompanied by either the photographic or videotaped proof that is requested.***
- **Use of cheat codes, Action Replays and the like is strictly prohibited – cheaters will be subjected to ritual humiliation for all to see.**
- **You are allowed to submit extra challenges at a later date to increase your standing – you don't have to do them all at once.**
- **There are only 17 challenges here – we'll be adding five more over the coming months to take advantage of forthcoming releases. Write and tell us if there are any you'd particularly like to see included.**
- **If you want your tapes etc back, please include a stamped, addressed envelope.**

NGC would like to offer a thousand thanks to the following members of the Games Radar forums for their contributions to Skill Club 2005: Pell, Rex_McGee, TS2Master, tnman, LewisVoigtlanderFord, Andrew Mills, Drumstick, Plasticcoated, Thanatos, Vyper, Lenty, sntaa, Adam Pollard, and Falcon. Cheers!

NGC SKILL CLUB ENTRY FORM



Hello there,

Completed enough challenges to earn a certificate? Tick them off here and send your completed form plus video/photo proof to:
Skill Club 2005,
NGC Magazine,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath
BA1 2BW

	A *F-Zero GX*		**K** *Tales of Symphonia*
	B *Super Smash Bros Melee*		**L** *Freedom Fighters*
	C *Pikmin 2*		**M** *The Legends of Zelda Wind Waker*
	D *Soul Calibur*		**N** *Timesplitters 2*
	E *Metroid Prime 2 Echoes*		**O** *Eternal Darkness*
	F *Resident Evil*		**P** *DK: Jungle Beat*
	G *Spider-Man 2*		**Q** *Resident Evil 4*
	H *1080 Snowboarding*		**R** *TBA*
	I *Donkey Konga*		**S** *TBA*
	J *Stars Rogue Squadron 2: Rogue Leader*		**T** *TBA*

Please send my certificate to:

NAME:..

ADDRESS:..

....

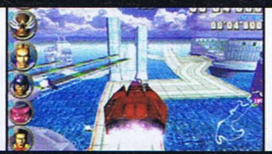
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Use a photocopy of this form if you'd rather not cut your copy of **NGC** Magazine

Challenge A — *F-Zero GX*

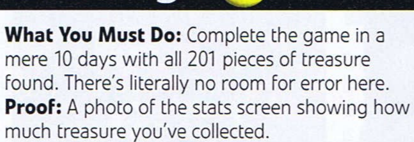


What You Must Do: Open up and beat all the staff ghosts.
Proof: A photo or video of your times

Challenge B — *Super Smash Bros.Melee*

What You Must Do: Get a total time of under 3 minutes 50 seconds for 10-man melee.
Proof: A photo of the screen showing total time spent.

Challenge C — *Pikmin 2*



What You Must Do: Complete the game in a mere 10 days with all 201 pieces of treasure found. There's literally no room for error here.
Proof: A photo of the stats screen showing how much treasure you've collected.

Challenge D — *Soul Calibur 2*

What You Must Do: With Mitsurugi and the Damascus Sword (which can't block attacks), complete 15 battles on Standard Extra Survival mode. Erk.
Proof: A video of your performance.

Challenge E — *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*

What You Must Do: Complete it with 22% items - no missiles, energy, dark/light beam expansions, bombs or beam special weapons.
Proof: A photo of the ending stats screen with 22% items clearly visible.

Challenge F — *Resident Evil*

What You Must Do: Complete the game under two hours with Jill. A nice speed run that keeps it tight, but certainly not impossible as it just requires a reasonably efficient route.
Proof: A photo of your time.

Challenge G — *Spider-Man 2*

What You Must Do: What You Must Do: Find every token. Secret, Hideout, Skyscraper… all of them!
Proof: Photos or video of the relevant stats.

Challenge H — *1080 Snowboarding*

What You Must Do: Beat 1'22"00 on Ride Easy Railways - Trestle Trouble, the toughest track in the game. Any character/board combo can be used except for the Rocket Board.
Proof: A photo of your time.

Challenge I — *Donkey Konga*

What You Must Do: Combo the entire song 'Don't Stop Me Now' on Gorilla mode. Yipes! Great and OK notes are allowed but you cannot lose your combo from the first note.
Proof: Photo of end of song screen will suffice.

Challenge J — *Stars Rogue Squadron 2: Rogue Leader*





What You Must Do: Get Gold medals on all levels, including the secret levels.
Proof: Photos or video of every medal.

Challenge K — *Tales of Symphonia*



What You Must do: Rack up an 85+ combo. Unison Attacks are key here.
Proof: A photo of the post-battle statistics screen – the screen you get after you emerge victorious from a fight.

Challenge L — *Freedom Fighters*

What You Must Do: On Freedom Fighers Mode, complete the last level (Fort Jay) without using a single recruit.
Proof: A video of the hoisted flag, skipping the credits and showing normal difficulty complete.

Challenge M — *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*

What You Must Do: Beat Gannondorf with only three hearts. That means you can only have collected three hearts in the entire game – no more!
Proof: A video of your performance.

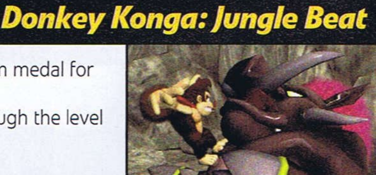
Challenge N — *Timesplitters 2*

What You Must Do: Get 56 Arcade Awards.
Proof: Video of you scrolling down the list of 56 arcade awards.

Challenge O — *Eternal Darkness*

What you Must Do: Complete the game three times, once with each artifact.
Proof: A photo showing that Eternal Mode is available.

Challenge P — *Donkey Konga: Jungle Beat*





What You Must Do: Get a Platinum medal for every level.
Proof: A short video, scrolling through the level select screen.

Challenge Q — *Resident Evil 4*

What You Must Do: Complete the game with a 90% hit ratio.
Proof: A photo of the end of game statistics. You are allowed to use a cleared game file for this challenge.

Challenge R — *TBA*

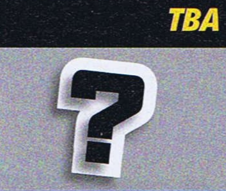
What You Must Do: TBA.
Proof: TBA





Challenge S — *TBA*

What You Must Do: TBA.
Proof: TBA



Challenge T — *TBA*

What You Must Do: TBA.
Proof: TBA



HEY! IT'S THE CONTINUATION OF...

GAME ON!




This is a plea on behalf of all your old games, lying around on a shelf gathering dust, dreaming of a better time when their place was in a console, not sandwiched between the games of yesterday. These games are not dead, there is still so much more that you can do for them.

All we're asking is that you pick these games up again and find new ways to make them fun again. When all the traditional gameplay is spent, you can just be inventive. Then again, there's no motivator quite like free games... The sender of our favourite challenge each month will receive a free game from our near-mythical drawer of wonders. So get playing and when you're done, send your idea in to Game On, NGC, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW.

SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE







DONKEY SMASH BROS

Lewis Voigtlander-Ford,
MILTON KEYNES

Set up a standard two minute melee match with the damage ratio set to two. Set player one as Samus and the CPU as any other character. Here's where it gets interesting. You now need to plug in the DK bongo controller socket two. Make sure that Samus is set to HMN and your opponent is set to CPU. Choose a flat level (such as Yoshi's battlefield) so that you don't have to worry about facing the right way. Now try to see what level you can get to. Here's the controls for the bongos. The top skins are X and Y and the bottom of the skins are B (which will charge up Samus' beam) and A. So there you go, playing *Smash Bros. Melee* with the bongo controller, now see how far you can get!



 3  2  1

MARIO SUNSHINE







SUICIDE DIVE

NO NAME OR ADDRESS SUPPLIED

This is a cheeky little one and involves you taking the poor little Italian plumber and throwing him off large buildings. What he did to deserve this? I don't know, but mine is not to reason why. Here's how to do it, get the rocket nozzle and climb to the top of the Delfino Tower. Here's the fun bit, you can fling yourself off it and see where you land. Kind of like pitch and toss crossed with base-jumping. Here's how you do it... Start a run up from the other end of the tower and charge up your rocket nozzle. Get to the edge and jump off, your rocket nozzle should now fire. The aim of the game is to fling the poor little plumber as you possibly can get him. Make him leap off some buildings!

LAND  IN THE WATER UNDERNEATH THE DOCK  ON THE WOODEN DOCK  ON THE FLOOR

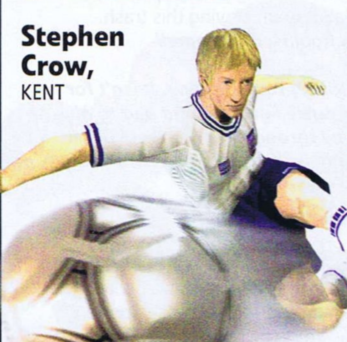
INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER 2





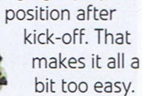
YELLOW FEVER

Stephen Crow,
KENT



The aim of this challenge is to play the beautiful game in a manner pretty far from beautiful. The aim is to play as dirty as you can without getting a player sent off. You have to get as many yellow cards as you can in a playtime of five minutes. There are other rules though. Firstly, no red cards. If you get one it's game over. Secondly, no diving. Fishing for cards like that is so very wrong on so many levels. Secondly, no changing a player's position after kick-off. That makes it all a bit too easy.





PLAYERS SENT OFF  10  8-9  5-7

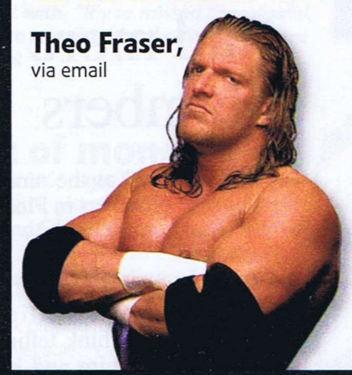
WWE DAY OF RECKONING





LAST MAN STANDING

Theo Fraser,
via email



Bought *WWE Day of Reckoning*? Annoyed that there's no Last Man Standing option? Then this is the challenge for you! You can very easily get the next best thing. All you have to do is to start a singles match and turn all of the options off (for example, no submissions, no pins, no count-outs) but leave KO's turned on. This way, the only way to win a match is to completely knock out your opponent, just like a Last Man Standing match. Would you believe it? I've gone this far writing about a wrestling game without mentioning men in leotards. That's surely some kind of record.

BEET THE OPPONENT  UNDER 2 MINS  UNDER 5 MINS  UNDER 10 MINS

NGC CHALLENGES WANTED

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN...



Have you discovered a weird and wonderful new way to play Nintendo games? Can you sum it all up in about 100 words? If you have a challenge you'd like to share with other **NGC** readers, then we want to hear about it. Jot down a quick explanation of what you've got to do on a piece of paper, set three suitable levels of achievement for gold, silver and bronze medals, stick it in an envelope, and send it to...

GAME ON, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Or email ngc@futurenet.co.uk, with Game On as the subject line.

We'll take challenges for absolutely any game on the good ol' Gamecube, but this month we're particularly interested in...


SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE


DONKEY SMASH BROS


RESIDENT EVIL 4


UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

THE BEST GET PRINTED RIGHT HERE, AND OUR FAVOURITE CHALLENGE WILL WIN A SHINY NEW GAMECUBE GAME. DEAL?

30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

EMAIL US!

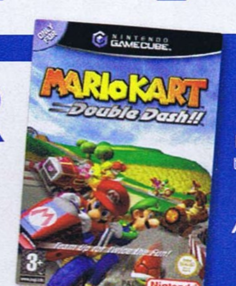
Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'...

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

Include your *name and address* so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

STAR LETTER

The sender of the Star Letter receives a shiny new game from our bulging sack – not necessarily Mario (or his double dash). Which one will you receive?



Fleetwood Weekly News and Chronicle
January 12, 2005 No. 388 32p
The Pride of the Port
www.fleetwoodtoday.co.uk

"Kick ass"

After reading the 'Harold S Bloxham' letter in issue 102 [where we challenged you to get a fake Reggie letter printed in a newspaper] I decided to give it a go, and I wrote a letter to the Fleetwood Weekly News. It was only for a laugh, but to my surprise it got published.
They edited out my 'kick ass and take names' part (for some reason you're not allowed 'ass' in a newspaper) which was a shame because it was the funniest bit.
Josh Cannings, Fleetwood

Weird – there's loads of ass in the newspapers I read. Fantastic job all the same, and congratulations on being the only person to successfully complete the challenge. If anyone else has managed it, send us your clippings. There will be a special prize for the first person to get a Reggie letter printed in one of the national papers. Ed

Game can find more plumbers

I AM shocked at the small amount of plumbers in Fleetwood and more widely in Britain.

The video game industry has Mario, an Italian plumber, and I think telling children about him and his merry antics could spur on the plumbing industry.

As a retired plumber, i used to get with the "hip hop generation" to spur on more children (teenagers) to pursue a career in plumbing.

So parents, buy your kids Mario games – they are non-violent, fun and help with careers!

Reginald Fils-Aime
Fleetwood

Bonus Letters

He actually makes tights look manly.
Arthur Plant, Thornhill
A horrid thought. Ed

I can't spread the Pokémon Fever all on my own. I'm asking you to get out there and start spreading the Pokémon Fever.
Peter Leonard, via email
I'm spreading it! Can you feel me spreading the fever? Ed

I had no idea as to what it meant, as I woke up.
Mark Timlin, Sunderland
Damn. Ed

Why would Nintendo change something that was so beautiful and change it to something that was beautiful but just not up to the standards of this picture.
Zac Hill, Bideford
Good grief, it's a 'Celda' letter – in the year 2005! Ed

"Awful game"

I would like to say how disappointed I have been with *Metroid Prime 2*. From the start this game has been tedious. I persevered because your review warned of a dull beginning and things did improve slightly with Sanctuary Fortress. After this, however, you have to pointlessly collect nine keys from around the entire map with no clue as to their whereabouts. This is truly awful game design. I actually gave up at this point, the thought of even greater tedium than had already been endured was unbearable.

It just goes to show that a good mechanical engine of a game is completely wasted on a game with no creative thought put into level design. I am surprised game testers didn't complain more about the horrendous back-tracking and dull enemies. Watching paint dry is more stimulating than playing this trash.
Aaron Robinson, via email

Well, it isn't for everyone. It isn't for me either, since I got lost and had to give up halfway through the first one. But it certainly isn't trash. Horses for courses,and all that. Ed

"Compromising"

"He's a bloke who dresses primarily in black, with a gun, and I think that's important." [*TimeSplitters* co-creator David Doak, quoted in issue 102]. These words from the man who revolutionised the first-person shooter were as unexpected as they were inevitable. Unexpected, as its prequel offered an authentic style, teeming with quirks, which still remains the superlative next-generation FPS. *Future Perfect* is substantially bloodier than previous renditions, and there appears to be a whole darker tone to complement the 18+ age rating. This confirms my ongoing concern that developers are compromising to suit the casual gaming market.

Take the recent *Prince Of Persia*, for example. No other franchise has ever gone through such a conspicuous transition - the game sported copious quantities of gore and the voluptuous depiction of women was appalling. It is sometimes easy to forget the goodness that was drowned inside when you're consistently reminded

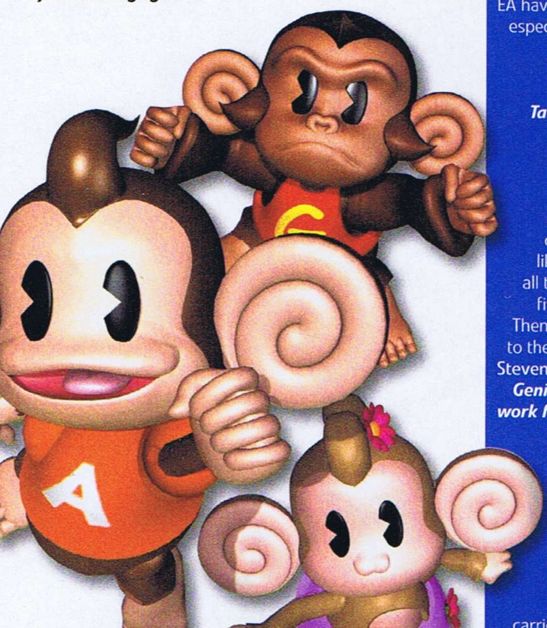
HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Thanks to everyone who wrote in, including (but not limited to):

Ros Davidson, Midlothian; Terry Scannell, High Wycombe; Jiaying Wang, Norway; Liam Fisher, Romford; Arthur Plant, Thornhill; Steven Crossley, Bury; Mitchell Heath, Nuneaton; Chris Morrey, Newcastle-Under-Lyme; Danny Rafferty, via email; Jonathan Fuller, via email; Tony Southion, via email; Michael Connor, Newport; David Sugarman, Shrewsbury; Daniel Lee, South Wales; Mushtaq Javed, Slough; Robert Smith, Urmston; Daniel Murphy, via email; Henry Sutcliffe, Alton; Adam Martin, St Helens; Darren Fitzpatrick, Gourock; Adam Paul, Norwich; Adam Vincent,

of the Prince's pretentious new complexion.

It's not that I dispute the quality of *Future Perfect*, but given that *Sands Of Time* and *TS2* were practically ambassadors to the hardcore gamer, to see their developers succumb to the already over-nourished casual gaming market boils me. Are casual gamers' demands more exacting than they used to be, or is the industry so volatile that these compromises are mandatory for success? Whatever the reason, if the industry continues to over-commercialise, then we could see the end of innovation as we know it.
Alasdair Henry, Morpeth

If you were a developer, would you keep your integrity and make a game that will be remembered for years to come by the few thousand hardcore gamers who bought it? Or would you sell out and make a mass-market game that tops the charts and pays off your mortgage? Ed



"Every sequel"

So sequels are more popular than original games? Yes, they are popular, but I think that people are foolish when they can't wait to get a sequel. According to your magazine, the original is always better. Take *Super Monkey Ball* for instance, the original game got 88%. Now look at the sequel: 82%. It is not even an occasional thing, either. *Prince of Persia: Sands Of Time* scored 91%; the sequel, 88%. This even extends to Nintendo's own creations - *Zelda, Metroid*... If your magazine is correct, then almost every sequel ever has been poorer than the original. This is why I just can't understand why everyone gets so excited when a sequel comes out, as you practically know that it won't be as great as the game that spawned it.
James Nicholls, Sutton

I think sequels often get lower scores because they're compared to their predecessors rather than judged entirely on their own merits. Give both Monkey Ball games to somebody who has never played them and I'd imagine the second one - the one with all the extra mini-games - would be more popular. For our audience of discerning Nintendo fans, we can go into a little more depth and explain why we think the first one is slightly better - freshness, originality, level design or whatever. But we do often qualify it with, "If you missed the original, this is the one to go for," or words to that effect. Ed

"Lot of money"

Christmas 2003, I got *FIFA 2004*. I was really happy with it and carried on playing it. October comes, and *FIFA 2005* comes out, with barely anything different from the last one. Does EA expect me to go pay full price for it just for the sake of a few statistic updates? It's either that or I am stuck playing a game that has a better version available. I can no longer enjoy playing *FIFA 2004* because of the fact there's a newer one out there. What EA Sports should do is release one every five years to give us plenty of time to enjoy it, and then perhaps release statistic expansions every so often for a tenner. This would keep people like me happy and EA Sports would still make a lot of money, so why don't they do it?
James Stock, Norwich

Here's a comparable analogy: Nike releases a new range of trainers every six months or so. You want them, even though they do exactly the same thing as your current shoes, but you can't justify spending all that cash. Besides, your old pair have at least another year or so left in them. Do you chuck them in the back of the cupboard just because they're last season's fashion? Do you expect Nike to sell customisation kits to keep your old shoes looking like the latest models? Do I even have a clue what I'm on about? Ed

"Jumping"

I am just writing in to point out something I noticed recently. Is it just me or are computer games strangely jump-orientated, for example, Mario, the main figurehead for Nintendo. His only power is to jump,

Bonus Letters

She put the 'N' in NGC.
Ben Kadel, via email
But the 'N' isn't meant to stand for 'numpty'. Ed

It is about half a centimetre thick.
Craig Ward, via email
And I'm calling the police. Ed

Recently I have been pondering over the justice you've been meting out to all the James Bond games EA have been making, especially *GoldenEye Rogue Agent*.
Chris Connelly, Verwood
Talk to the hand. Ed

I have a great plan. Drop the console price to like a tenner and all the games for a fiver, for a week. Then put them back to the normal prices.
Steven Crossley, Bury
Genius. You should work for the Bank of England. Ed

Wouldn't it be great if there was a game on the Gamecube in which Mario carries Luigi around in his backpack (who magically develops wings, and can carry the ol' plumber over large gaps).
Henry Everett, Bristol
If by 'great' you mean 'Banjo-Kazooie'. Ed

We'd like to see them given the treatment they deserve by their marketing daddies.
Peter Leonard, via email
Who's your daddy? Ed



Issue 103, page 41: crushing mistake on the title - Sawaru Made In Wario
Michael Rumsby, Alton

That's the name of the game, you chimp. Sawaru - it's Japanese for 'touch'. As opposed to mawaru, which means 'rotate'. Drop to the floor and give me 20. Ed

On page 58 of issue 103, the 'sinking chimp' section states 'Moving left or right makes DK work his way. down Leave him' etcetera. This hardly makes grammatical sense unless I've been learning a crazy kind of English. Don't you guys have spelling and grammar check? This took me literally tens of seconds to decode. I hope you're happy.
Anton-Jari Desai-Paulden, Bristol

Geraint's spell-checker collapsed under. The strain. Of dealing with his Welsh grammatical. Idiosyncrasies. I'll buy him another. Ed

Eccles; Sam Bristow, Bottisham; C Lewis, Bolton; Sam Bridgett, Farnham; Sebastian Hamilton, Gloucestershire; Richard Dally, via email; Brian C, via email; Emily Jacob, via email; Martin Jones, via email; Francis Ween, Aberdeenshire; Hugh Horton, Malta; Jennifer Everly, via email; Reginald Fees Ee-may, somewhat unlikely; Andrew Simmonds, Manchester; Daniel Scott, Perth; Dave France, via email; Henry Stockdale, Bournemouth; Richard Lecutier, via email; Tony Southion, London; Matthew Duffell, Chorley; Stephen Ashby, Dorset; Sean McGuire, Amersham; Alan Kasim, London; Sam Rose, Bingham; Jack Scott, Settle.
Many thanks to you all.

CREATIVE CORNER

This month's top arts and crafts masterpieces…

'Omnimosity'

I'd like to share with you my vision of a Dark Link teamed with Dark FLUDD. I've done it in black and white: 1, because I think the lack of colour brings a certain omnimosity to the character; 2, because I think only cel-shading could pull this character off; 3, because I can't afford proper ink colours.
Justin Jones, Bedford

***I have no idea what 'omnimosity' is, but it suits this character very well.* Ed**



'Most favourite'

I thought I would draw my most favourite game character, to show that there are a lot of good artists out there. I hope you like it.
Louise Miller, Stockton-on-Tees

***Nice. I'm a big fan of Kid Icarus too.* Ed**

that's it. He jumps and saves the world. Look at the Zelda series, most of the time Roc's feather/cape was always the last item you got, and it gives the power to jump. Wow. How fantastic. For crying out loud there an entire genre dedicated to jumping! It's called platforming, and whether you like it or not it's about jumping. Jumping! How many times a day do you jump? Really? When was the last time you jumped? How is it that something that plays such a small part in real life has become such an essential part of gaming? And another thing, what's up with double jumping? It's impossible and makes no sense, yet it features regularly in games. With no explanation supplied to how it's done. Try a double jump. Right now. It's pretty hard isn't it? Could someone explain where it came from, and more importantly how it's done?
Josh Coyne, Ashbrook

***Yeah! And what about the games where you can get shot about 20 times, then eat a piece of cooked chicken off the street – off the street – and be completely healed? Or the ones where you find ammo inside exploding wooden crates. Or the ones where you're on an urgent mission to save the whole world but you still have to spend days collecting enough small change to buy some essential item you could just as easily steal. Who invents this rubbish?* Ed**

"Pity you"

I pity you poor people. A brand new Nintendo handheld and you don't seem to be able to use it. I don't consider myself to be anything special, but how can you not like the touch screen control for games like *Mario* and *Ridge Racer*? Touch screen control in *Mario* is just as controllable as the N64 version - in fact wall-kick jumping is so much easer to do than on the N64 controller. I didn't need to spend hours practicing to get used to the controls, although *Tiger Woods* took a couple of goes to get used to the swing. The touch screen control is excellent, and far superior to using an analogue stick. One day I think you'll realise the error of your ways, but until then I'll just keep feeling that pity.
Farron Hussey, Peterborough

***Keep telling yourself that* Mario 64 DS *is as controllable as the N64, and some day you might actually believe it. It's a very good game, but to claim the touch screen works as well as the N64 controller is wrong. Wrong!* Ed**

"Using RF"

With reference to Jacques Hemmings's letter [issue 103, 'Little Trick'], his television may well run at 60Hz. If the television has Teletext/Fastext, whether it has Scart/AV or not, there is a good possibility that it will run 60Hz on RF. However this is not always the case as some televisions without Teletext/Fastext run at 60Hz on RF anyway. If you connect to a television using RF to run a 60Hz game and the unit doesn't have Teletext/Fastext you may get a rolling picture. If this happens, look for a vertical hold dial, give it a twist and you should rectify the problem. Hope this is of some help. Your old N64 RF adaptor should work too.
Gareth Cole, Hucknall

***So that's how to play* Metroid Prime 2 *if you don't have an up-to-date telly. See also So Tell Me This (over there, on the right). I'm sure there's a very exciting technical explanation, but please keep it to yourselves, folks.* Ed**

"Avid"

I have been an avid reader since the early N64 Magazine, dating all the way back to the good old days – issue six to be precise… Anyway, I have managed to collect and keep every issue up to the present. But I don't have issues 1-5 in my collection. Would it be possible for you to complete my fan-boy magazine collection and provide me with my missing copies? Could you find it in the bottom of your heart to make a man happy again?
Will Cheyney, via email

***Much as I'd love to help you and everyone else looking for vintage N64 mags, I'm afraid we ran out of stock of the early issues some time in 1997. I've seen them crop up on Ebay every now and then.* Ed**

"Sounds daft"

People seem pretty sure that, when the time rolls around, Nintendo will be unveiling their new Revolution console, intent on battling PS3 and Xbox 2 for supremacy with something completely different. Forgive me if I'm being a little naïve, but who said Revolution was going to be a console? I know it sounds daft, but if you think about it, it makes sense…

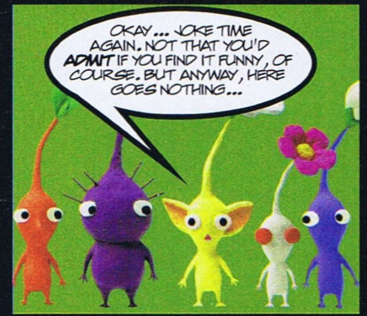
For Microsoft and Sony, the path seems obvious; updated graphics, better sound quality, faster processing speeds, impressive paint job, decent marketing, developer thumbs-up and voila, we have a console. Nintendo have made things hard for themselves in creating the illusion that not only will they be among those announcing new hardware when the next generation comes, but theirs will be something totally different.

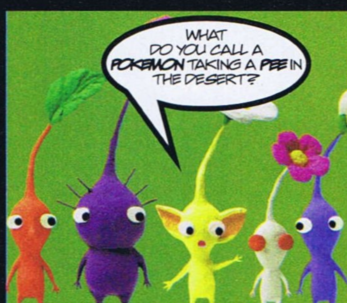
But what form will Nintendo's next home console take? Will it be a revolution? I don't think so. If you look back through Nintendo's history, you can see that many of the major breakthroughs in the games industry are largely due to them. But none of these have ever had anything to do with the consoles themselves. It's always been more about the controls and the games. The D-pad, the analogue stick, rumble pak, shoulder buttons – they all changed the way we play, and yet they were all changes not to the actual console, but to the controller.

It's a similar situation with the games. *Super*



SEND US YOUR NINTENDO JOKES! MAKE THEM GOOD AND YOU WIN A GAME. BUT IF MR WHITE FAILS TO SEE THE FUNNY SIDE, THE YELLOW PIKMIN DIES. HORRIBLY. THIS MONTH: JOKE INFLICTED BY GARETH MARTIN









WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK



Mario 64 had little to do with the power of the N64 – the same game could be done on any of the consoles of the day. What made *Mario 64* a revolution was that the game was programmed to let you move in three dimensions, and the controller was built to allow you to do that. In fact, the only major change that hardware has ever given us has been the move from cartridges to CDs, and – apart from blessing us with the presence of loading screens – that hasn't actually changed the way we play the games.

I think that the revolution Nintendo talk about isn't a console, but something totally different. After all, Iwata himself proclaimed, "The time when horsepower alone made a difference is over." If Revolution is to be what Nintendo promise, then it's probable it will involve not a major change in the hardware, but a change in the controls or the style of games which, of course, would certainly be feasible on the Gamecube.

So who says that Nintendo's Revolution would happen on a future console? What if, instead of revealing a new games machine, Nintendo unveil a revolutionary game (Mario 128?) or input device for Gamecube at E3 2005? If this were to happen, then obviously I, along with many readers, would be rather pleased at not having to fork out on yet another games machine, when we're quite happy and well catered for with the one we have. But I have a horrible feeling that the recent slump in the Gamecube's fortunes, despite having the best overall Christmas games line-up, would tempt Nintendo into cutting their losses with the little black (or purple) box and starting with something fresh. I mean if Gamecube is failing now, then it's certainly not going to be able to compete with two new, upgraded models.

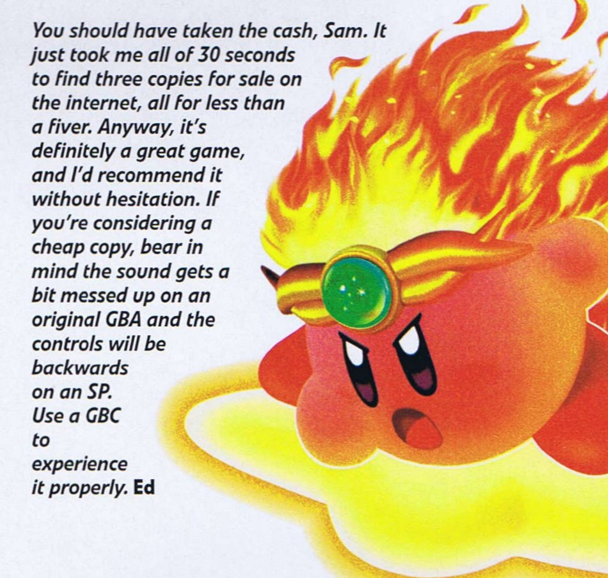
I'd be lying if I said that the idea of a new Nintendo console doesn't sound appealing, but I just can't see it happening. It seems that Microsoft are the ones moving towards the next generation, with Sony following closely behind, not wanting to lose the market they currently own. From where I stand, it looks like Nintendo are in danger of being forcibly dragged along too; having to come up with a new console in order to stay in the market they helped create.
Dan Robinson, Skipton

The mystical Revolution has us all puzzled, but if it isn't a super-powerful new console then I'll eat my underpants. We'll find out in May whether or not I'll be chowing down on Britain's most toxic piece of nylon fabric. Ed

"I said no"

Why, oh why, did Nintendo not release *Kirby's Tilt & Tumble* in the UK? I bought the game while I was over in the USA, and I loved it from the time I started playing it to the end credits. That's because it was unique, it was fresh and so far it has been the best Kirby game ever. One person offered me £45 for it, because he couldnt get it on import. I said no because I could never sell it, it's such a great game. It's like the *Animal Crossing* situation. Why did they not release it straight away?
Sam Rose, Bingham

You should have taken the cash, Sam. It just took me all of 30 seconds to find three copies for sale on the internet, all for less than a fiver. Anyway, it's definitely a great game, and I'd recommend it without hesitation. If you're considering a cheap copy, bear in mind the sound gets a bit messed up on an original GBA and the controls will be backwards on an SP. Use a GBC to experience it properly. Ed



SO TELL ME THIS...

Your questions answered by the NGC muthabrain

I note the new Metroid Prime only works on 60Hz TVs. How do you know if your TV can accept such a signal? I have only seen TVs advertised as 100Hz or nothing, and presumed the 'nothing' sets used the standard 50Hz.
Craig Thornton, Welton

Pretty much all recent TV's will handle 60Hz, unless they're exceptionally cheap and rubbish. You can test it with the many games that support a 60Hz option. Load the game, follow the instructions to switch it into 60Hz mode while it loads (you may have to hold the B-button to make the option appear) and if the picture doesn't vanish or turn black-and-white, you have a 60Hz-compatible telly.

1. If DS supports wi-fi connectivity, where are the games that use this feature?
2. How can I go online with my DS?
3. Why isn't Pictochat online? I'm the only one in my street with a DS so I haven't been able to chat to anyone yet.
Mark James, London

1. Nintendo dropped hints about Mario Kart being online, but at the time of writing nothing definite has been announced.
2. Assuming an online game is released, you'll just have to be in the vicinity of a wireless access point. Any wi-fi router will automatically detect your DS. Blork!
3. Because the online servers still aren't ready, and Nintendo didn't want to delay the launch of DS. I wouldn't be surprised to see an online Pictochat built into future versions of the DS, or something similar built into online titles as part of a pre-game chat lobby.

If I buy one of the official Nintendo Memory Card 1019s from America, will it work on my UK Gamecube?
Karl Thomson, London

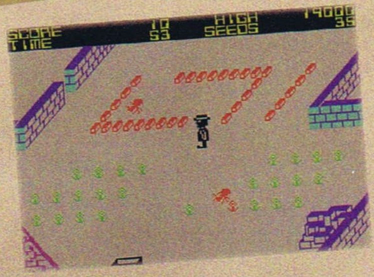
Yes. Nintendo's massive, EA-friendly memory card works on any version of Gamecube, although a handful of games don't recognise it or will behave in an unpredictable manner. There's a complete and up-to-date list of affected titles (and they're mostly rubbish ones) available on the US nintendo.com website.

TIMEWARP

A history lesson that's actually interesting

THE FAMILY TREE

The sordid history of today's bestest games



PEDRO (1984)

Crop management (read: gardening) games don't come much older than this British, and quite frankly, ancient ant-stomper from prehistoric times...

LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE (1985)

This is the granddaddy of *The Sims* - an early attempt at making you care about an on-screen fella's happiness happiness and well-being.





DOUKYUUSEI (1992)

This was the premier Japanese dating sim, paving the way for an explosion of very similar win girl/lose girl 'games', thank goodness they've slowly gone the way of the buffalo.

SIMFARM (1993)

Upsettingly complex rural *SimCity* spinoff, with field upon field of crop and livestock to fret over.

HARVEST MOON (1996, SUPER NINTENDO)

Track back the history of farm-'em-up *Harvest Moon* and you end up at this Super Nintendo treat, which gave Japanese gamers - many of whom live in tiny apartments within vast concrete high-rises - an escape into a world of fields, crops, cows and smell.

The set-up was odd, with your two heartless parents sodding off for two-and-a-half years, leaving you to make a success of their decrepit farm. But like today's *Harvest Moon*'s, farm life proved tons of fun: your own pet dog, a town full of folk to exchange clunkily-translated text with, and five different pixelated pretties to woo into wearing your ring.

Harvest Moon's genius lies in the freedom to gradually fill your farm with your own unique combo of crops, cows and chickens, married to a rigid timetable of crop-watering and cow-stroking that meant every crate of onions sold was a proud achievement. Intentionally brief game days (only a few minutes long) made it genuinely exciting when you found a precious few seconds to attend a festival or hunt down a secret – like plaintive wild gorilla-monster MuuMuu.

This SNES original has provided the template for every *Harvest Moon* since. The obligatory village beer-lover sitting sozzled in the pub? Born right here.



LEGEND OF THE RIVER KING (1997)

Angling-focused RPG from the *Harvest Moon* team. Like *Pokémon* with fish. And fights with bees.

ANIMAL CROSSING (2000)

Harvest Moon with the agriculture scaled back and the house decoration and mad raccoons beefed up.



HARVEST MOON: IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE (2003)

They're still knocking them out: the latest, greatest *Harvest Moon* is admirably true to the original.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

News rounded up from the wild world of retrogaming

CLASSICS GO MAD

Nintendo's Japanese chief of all things marketing singled out the Famicom Classics range for special back-patting in an interview this month. The 30-strong line-up of GBA retrogames (20 of which are on sale here as NES Classics) has sold an impressive 7.21 million copies since going on sale last February. They were only in stores for a bit before crafty Nintendo whipped them off the shelves – and helpless retro freaks were forced to buy the whole lot to get their hands on a must-have presentation pack.



DS AS TIME MACHINE

If you're 'of a certain age' and searching for that thin excuse you need to fritter away your savings on a Nintendo DS, you'll be giggling at the news that *Atari Retro Classics* is among the machine's launch titles. The ten games included – *Pong*, *Breakout*, *Missile Command* and so on – have been given a graffiti makeover by top New York spraycan artists we've never heard of, plus touch-screen play and wireless head-to-head for four players, if you love your retro and have a DS, then look no further.



ANCIENT ART

Starting April, the hopelessly trendy Gallery 1988 art gallery in Los Angeles will be playing host to an exhibition entitled "i am 8bit". 100 proper artists have sketched, pencilled, airbrushed, photoshopped and – in at least one case – stitched new works based around classic games of yore. The results range from the ridiculous (weird quasi-religious *Pac-Man* painting) to the brilliant (cloth retro *Donkey Kong*; the amazing *Excitebike* pic made of tiny 3D blocks). Art is fun, kids.

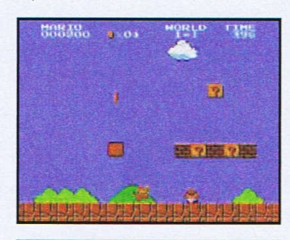


HIGH SCORES

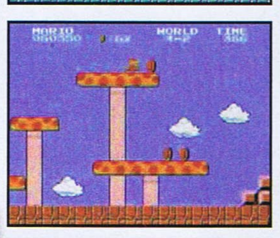
SMB IN FIVE MINUTES!

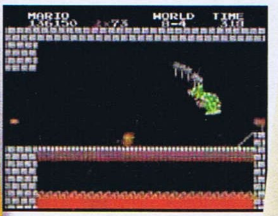
5 mins 9 secs is the official world record for completing *Super Mario Bros.*, as certified by longtime game umpires Twin Galaxies. Doubters can check the nine seconds faster (but uncertified) video at the web address below. Tricks like sliding right through solid pipes and jumping backwards for an instant burst of speed are impressive, but the real gob-dropper is the millisecond-perfect button-pressing that sees Mario race along at mach 5.

http://www.nintendorecords.com/games/supermariobros/supermariobros.html









5 THINGS

FIVE... little-known retro facts to flaunt at dinner parties



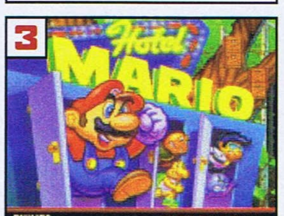
1 DONKEY KONG IS MISSING ONE LEVEL

Have you played *Donkey Kong* as a NES Classic or in *Animal Crossing*? No? Not at all? Then you're definitely missing out – the NES game, like most versions since, is lacking the arcade's ace Cement Factory stage, poor luck there, really.



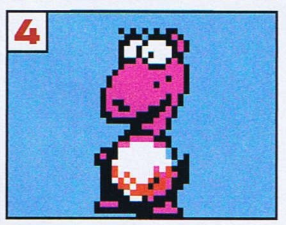
2 NINTENDO LISTENED IN 1983

Reggie was wrong to bark madly about Nintendo DS's built-in microphone – the very same feature existed for a short time on the Japanese NES, with a voice-recogniser packed into the second controller, it's all been done before, see..



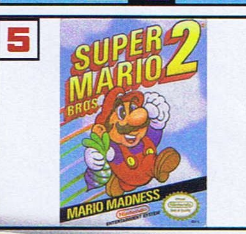
3 NOT ALL MARIO GAMES MAKE HAPPY

Probably Mario's least known and played game is 1994's *Hotel Mario*, a weird door-hopping platformer with proper cartoon cutscenes. Released only on Philip's doomed CD-based console, the CD-i.



4 BIRDO WAS A BLOKE

The ironically named 'Birdo' started out in *Super Mario Bros. 2* as a male pink egg-spitter who, according to the manual, "thinks he is a girl" and would "rather be called 'Birdetta'". Blimey. The sheer possibility and volume for gags here has temporarily short circuited our brains...



5 MARIO KEEPS CHANGING OUTFITS

If you find it hard to remember which bit of Mario's costume is red and which is blue, it's no surprise: he's was a red-dungarees man right up until *Super Mario Bros 3*. And don't mention the brown T-shirt in *SMB1*. Why can't he just make up his mind?



RETRO TAT

Yes kids, it's the legally dubious: 'Mobile TV Game'!

NGC reader Aaron Guest found this less-than-official Nintendo console. The beauty is, unlike those '500-in-1' bootlegs offloaded by dodgy types at car boot sales in the UK, the 'Mobile TV Game' features 20 old NES games that have had their music and graphics 'subtly' altered. Because, of course, that makes it all totally legal. *Urban Fighter* has become 'Spar', a sinister woodland battle between two grotesque pigmen, while *Balloon Kid* is now 'Air Umbrella', a game featuring monkeys flying around the screen using magic umbrellas. The games are completely different [muffled laughter]!



THE MAKING OF...

TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT


ngc00.boxes.timespl_fut.jpg







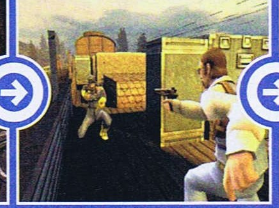
△ Ah, the train... ring any bells, *GoldenEye* fans?

FRIENDLY FIRE

Timesplitters Future Perfect has Gamecube-controlled helpers in abundance: Harry Tipper in Russia, Captain Ash helping storm the 1920s castle and fellow Spacetime Marines swarming for victory in 2401. "Level immersion's the reason," says Hasit.











The first thing you find out when you speak to Hasit Zala, the quiet team leader at Free Radical, is that he certainly knows his monkeys.

"The idea of monkeys with guns actually came about in America during the '50s," says Hasit. "The US army experimented with forming a true gorilla army. Just as the navy trained dolphins to mine ships, the army attempted to create its own unique mammalian force, even going so far as designing new weaponry such as The Banooka."

Well, maybe. But the idea of an army of shrieking simians charging into Korea is tame compared to some of the *Timesplitters Future Perfect* moments that Hasit helped devise. Such brilliantly barmy ideas would have stayed safely locked up in the brains of people like Hasit if it hadn't been for people like you buying *Future Perfect*'s prequel.

Timesplitters 2 was a brazenly brainless blast with more speed, bullets and multiplayer fun juice than most other shooters put together, but it was really a one-off project, a kind of revenge mission aimed at putting right the wrongs forced out of a team under pressure to deliver the first *Timesplitters*. Then it went and sold by the lorry-load. "Making a sequel was really quite an easy decision," says Hasit.

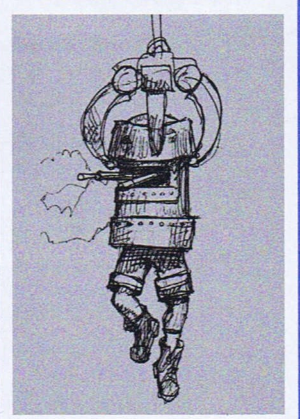
Work on *Timesplitters 3* (as it was known until a year ago) began around October 2002. A team ten people larger than the *TS2* crowd – over 40 programmers, level builders, cutscene creators, background artists, character designers and enemy animators – sat down at Free Radical's headquarters in Nottingham (nearest famous landmark? "The M1") and started bashing out the code that would end up on the shimmery Gamecube disc released this month. Their aim: cram in enough great stuff to pummel the prequel senseless.

"The biggest worry was attempting to match our ambition with the available development time," says Hasit. "There are always more cool ideas than it's ever practical to implement."

This time, they wanted to sit you down and tell you a story. Narrative-heavy Free Radical stablemate *Second Sight* had shone a harsh spotlight on *Timesplitters 2*'s slightly disparate jumble of individual levels, and Hasit and co's first job was to write a cohesive plotline that focused on a single central character. So a new mission for *TS2*'s leading male Cortez was born: to destroy the Timesplitters before they're created. Yep, like The Terminator, but with several more monkeys.

That left the team deciding how many timezones *Future Perfect*'s hero would be leaping between.

TURRETS



Hasit has a soft spot for Turret Man, who more than lives up to his name. He's simply a metallic gun turret with arms and legs. "He's a big favourite," says Hasit. "Especially early on when uplinking him caused him to rotate at ever increasing speed." Developers really are ker-azy.

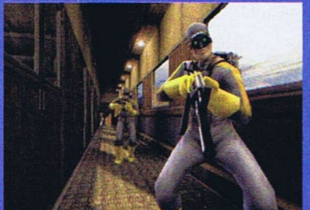
FILED BY: MARK GREEN

Publisher: EA	Release date: 25th March 05
Developer: Free Radical Design	Highest Gamecube Pos: TBA
	Reviewed: NGC/105, 88%

ngcmo_sheet 1

△ Free Radical have worked the controls to fluid perfection.









"That was the first real decision," recalls Hasit. "Initially, we felt we should only have two timezones. That would potentially cut down the amount of unique artwork that we'd need to create. But we quickly that realised this would be too restrictive and make secondary characters difficult to incorporate.

> **THEIR AIM: CRAM IN ENOUGH GREAT STUFF TO PUMMEL THE PREQUEL SENSELESS**

So we settled on five timelines, each incorporating a sidekick character who would feature alongside Cortez. Five timelines spanning the past, present and future."

Then it was just a case of throwing in ideas for where exactly each level would be set and making them work. Not easy when you've decided to incorporate brain-melting time paradoxes that see Cortez aiding Cortez in bringing down an Apache helicopter in 1960s Russia. Or Cortez joining Cortez and Cortez (with a little extra help from Cortez) to knock the heads off 2052-era security bots while tripping a security system.

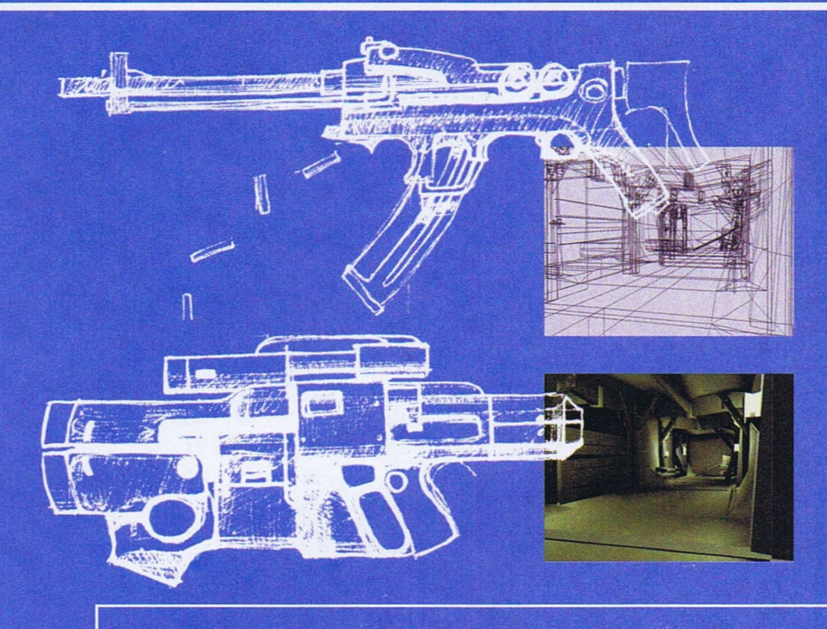
Then there are the jokes. *Future Perfect* was never going to escape Nottingham without a generous helping of humour; the bits so uniquely and recognisably funny that even internally they'd become known as *Timesplitters* moments. Hasit admits the twisted minds at his command didn't always find it easy to "maintain a balance between humour and good taste. The cat, in many ways, is the new monkey. First we started out with a Bond-style villain, Khallos, who in keeping with all classic villains, was rather attached to his pet cat, Strudel. However, Khallos's arch nemesis – Harry Tipper – had sat on Strudel and doomed him to spend the rest of his life as a remote-controlled stuffed cat. Cue wild feline screeching, power-sliding, and high-octane cat racing."

Taking its lead from *Second Sight, Timesplitters Future Perfect* was expressly designed to be a bit brainier than its dad. Vacantly emptying your gun in '20s Scotland is balanced against tricky stealth in the 2050s timezone. A deliberately varied cast of critters (from hapless henchmen to those tricky Timesplitter gits) are anxious to meet you, and there's more freedom to choose between using guns or guile while clearing each

TOILETS



Free Radical seem to have had an obsession with toilets ever since some of their number helped code GoldenEye's *memorable Facility bog-drop. "The first time we saw the uplinked toilet brush in action on* Future Perfect's *train level was a memorable moment," says Hasit. "It provoked much laughter and disgust in equal measure. Perhaps we should have used this for a redecorating minigame." Eh?*





TIME AFTER TIME

Free Radical worked like crazy beavers to stick to the *Timesplitters* template while adding lots of new stuff.



1 **Hasit: "The constant, smooth frame rate is a cornerstone of the series. It forces us to make careful technical decisions about what features we can employ, but the benefits in terms of fluid, dynamic play have always been evident in the multiplayer."**



2 **Along with "finishing the game," Hasit counts the cross-dressing episode with secret agent Harry Tipper among his favourite *Timesplitters Future Perfect* moments. The perfect demonstration of what makes Free Radical so Free Radical."**



3 **Paradoxes created loads more problems. "The greatest problem was trying to make sections interesting despite the player having played through them already. Making it work on the second playthrough was quite tricky."**



4 **What of Hasit's favourite level? "If I had to choose one favourite level, the 1920s Scottish castle would probably just clinch it. If only because it was the level we developed first and spent the most time on. It's the standout stage." Fair enough, then.**

stage. In fact, the weaponry was carefully balanced to make you think a bit more about how to tear the face off a particular enemy. "The design process for a gun is a really good example of how different disciplines within the team work together," says Hasit. "Each weapon starts out as an actual requirement for gameplay - many of them are particularly tailored for use against certain enemies. From there an artist creates a model gun and paints it, before it's passed to an animator who gives the gun its weight by showing how it moves while firing. Then a coder actually makes it fire and tunes the damage it does. Finally, our musician, Graeme Norgate, puts the finishing touches with appropriately loud sound effects."

By September 2003, the game was well on its way, in coding terms at least. In terms of actually making its way to the shops, it was absolutely nowhere, as it no longer had a publisher. Eidos, who'd strode hand-in-hand with *Timesplitters* since the beginning, admitted in a financial report that they wouldn't be publishing the third in the series. Rumours claimed the game was being shopped around, with Activision allegedly expressing an interest.

Meanwhile, work on getting *Future Perfect* shop-ready wasn't all hard slog, thanks to some unintentionally hilarious out-takes. One scene – a male zombie pulling a stake from the chest of a female zombie sprawled on a pool table – was cut "after some discussion about the animation looking rather suggestive from certain angles. For example, the front, back and sides." And when vehicles were thrown in, Free Radical realised that not all their virtual heroes had passed their driving test. "In the castle level you find a truck waiting for you," says Hasit. "You've then got the choice of driving it or manning the gun while the Gamecube-controlled Captain Ash drives. In early versions, you'd climb in the back, then watch as Ash leapt into the driver's seat and, with a cry of 'Tally-ho!', floored it and drove straight off the dock into the sea. Restart from checkpoint."

January 2004 saw *Timesplitters Future Perfect* finally find a home

"HASIT IS REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING WHAT YOU THINK OF THE PLOT"

TROUBLE



When asked to name his favourite three slabs of Future Perfect shoot metal, Hasit names the harpoon gun, the flare gun and the monkey gun. The reason for the latter? "I was closely involved with the technical side of the code that allowed the box to animate into a box." We'll leave it there.

△ A bit of mid-level boss-action, in the shapely form of a tank. Luckily you've got the redoubtable Captain Ash to help you.

at EA, like pretty much everything else these days. At around the same time, the game earned itself a Mature rating in the US and a 15 rating from the BBFC in the UK. Hasit and team decided to exploit this and make *Future Perfect* gory. "So enter the world of blood. The mutants that frequent the Ugenix labs, when shot by the dart guns containing the highly experimental life-enhancing serum, experience the serious side effect of expanding and exploding into a shower of blood and guts. A sight to behold."

At the beginning of May last year, Free Radical and EA got a shock. The words *Timesplitters Future Perfect* were suddenly and unexpectedly all over the internet, leaked by an online games site a week before the planned announcement at the upcoming E3 expo. While EA scrabbled to limit the damage with an official announcement, the team basked in the happy reaction to the first batch of good looking *Future Perfect* screenshots, which dribbled out alongside the new game name. Then it was all smiles at E3 a couple of weeks later when the explosive train levels were shown off to general acclaim from the gaming press.

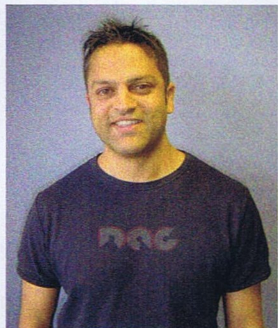
But there was another complication as in the middle of production, the whole Free Radical team had to move to a new building. Still, Hasit claims that the new home made for a "more functional environment than I guess most people would expect." As this was going on, *Timesplitters Future Perfect* was somehow polished to perfection as the team managed to squeeze the game's massive levels into one Gamecube disc.

Now, it's out on the shelves and could be all yours. And Hasit is really looking forward to seeing what you think of the plot. "We've spent a lot of time making the story a fully-featured single player experience. Previous *Timesplitters* games were criticised for having a relatively weak single-player campaign."

And with that, he was gone. Must be one of those time paradox things...



END GAME



When we spoke to Hasit, the hard-working Free Radical folks still hadn't quite wiped their hands of **Timesplitters Future Perfect**. *"The game is still waiting to be approved to be sent to the shops," he says. "Once the green light is given, it'll be straight down the nearest pub." That'll teach those show-off American coders with their lavish all-night parties, eh?*

"WE'VE SPENT A LOT OF TIME MAKING THE STORY A FULLY-FEATURED SINGLE PLAYER EXPERIENCE"





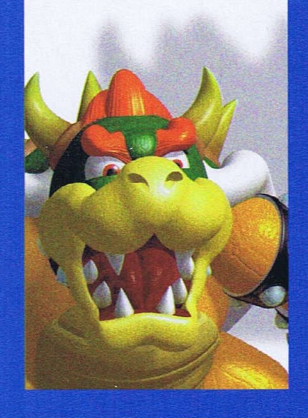
WHY YOU NEED IT!



Your up-to-date guide to the hottest PAL titles.

Games aren't cheap. Even when you buy pre-owned games, it's still a bit gutting to get your bargain treasure home and find you've splashed out on a box of gaming garbage. Hence this buyer's guide – it's got:

- **The 100 top-scoring games, listed in score order so you can begin with the very best.**
- **We tell you which issue it was reviewed in, so if you want to know more you can look through your back issues. You *do* have them, don't you?..**
- **A brief description of the game, so if you don't have that issue you can find out the most important points about it.**
- **Highlighted games, with a little more detail. As games join the list, the highlights will change!**



1 RESIDENT EVIL 4 — 97

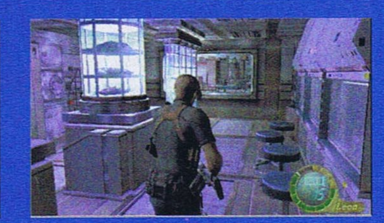
What, no zombies? What's going on? Something spectacular, that's what. This installment takes the *Resi* series to the next level with an unprecedented amount of innovation. Gone are the three day long animations of doors opening and wandering about scrumping for ammo, and in comes this new, far more dynamic game.

NGC STAR GAME









2 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA THE WIND WAKER — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It's as exquisitely fashioned as a Disney feature film, and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, but this is as close to art as games have got.

NGC STAR GAME





3 METROID PRIME — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76

Looks absolutely incredible and there's no slow down, despite the huge, incredibly detailed environments. The action's varied and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you'll ever play.

NGC STAR GAME





4 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE — 96

NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform 'heroes' how it's really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story. Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. You need one of those…







5 METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES — 94

NINTENDO ■ NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the logs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren't as varied and awe-inspiring as *Prime's*, but that's our one complaint.



6 MARIO KART DOUBLE DASH — 93

NINTENDO ■ NGC/88

Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pickup boxes, weapons from slippy bananas to green shells and giant Yoshi eggs, and all your favourite Ninty faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI's a bit cheaty (a shell *just* as we're about to win? Hmm…) but it's a whole lotta fun.







7 F-ZERO GX — 92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

This is a blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep the pace up without getting the frame rate jitters. You will never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would've been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?



8 PIKMIN 2 — 92

NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Louie, Olimar's assistant, has proved less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they've had to return to Earth for a longer session of collecting treasure. They've got two new types of Pikmin to help them out, too. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original







9 SOUL CALIBUR 2 — 91

NAMCO ■ NGC/85

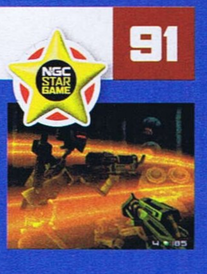
Excellent fast-paced fighting. Weapon master mode is your key to unlocking the three hidden characters – but the real star of the show's not hidden! For the Gamecube version, Namco have dropped in Link, complete with bow and arrow. It's the best fighting game on *any* system.



10 TIMESPLITTERS 2 — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious 'Splitters. This means shooting things. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate and you'll wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future. And you *will* love every minute. The multiplayer's the icing on the cake.





TOP TEN GBA GAMES



1 ADVANCE WARS 1 & 2

Cute-looking turn-based strategy, with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. *AW2* is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.

2 WARIO WARE

Imagine the simple graphics and gameplay of Game & Watch fired at you in five-second bursts. Loopy fun that you'll keep returning to.



3 MARIO & LUIGI SUPERSTAR SAGA

An RPG with puzzle and platform elements starring our two top plumbers.



4 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

One of the most memorable outings for Link (alongside *Ocarina of Time*). Comes with bonus *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure.

5 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2

This tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level designs ever.

6 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE

The same structure as before – catch 'em all, send 'em into battle – but still the most entertaining RPG out there…

7 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

Nicks the best bits from the SNES and N64 versions, and if you've got four friends, GBAs and cables, they can play too.

8 METROID FUSION/ ZERO MISSION

Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found in these two games. A sprawling environment littered with enemies and an imposing difficulty level.

9 HARVEST MOON

A slow burner, *HM: Friends of Mineral Town* is a farming/charming sim to die for. It'll last you months.

10 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3

An incredible conversion of one of the best fighters ever. Massive single-player and a brilliant two-player.

DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

11 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE — 91



NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

All your Nintendo favourites get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglypuffs are better than one Link? You'll have massive amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.

12 HARVEST MOON A WONDERFUL LIFE — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/91

Romance the ladies, keep cows and grow veggies as the seasons change… Despite a new chapter structure, this farm sim loses its way a little when you've got your bride and have few new goals apart from hybridising crops, but you'll keep returning to do a bit of milking…

13 HITMAN 2 SILENT ASSASSIN — 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/82

Bald barcoded assassin 47 comes out of retirement and takes on the bad guys with a range of weapons. Not bad for a bloke who spends his time in a shed. You're rewarded for doing things quietly – but how you go about it is up to you, because this is free-form gaming at its finest.

14 MARIO POWER TENNIS — 91

Controversy reigned supreme with this reworking of the N64 classic *Mario Tennis*. However, if you stick with it and learn the ins and outs of the power shots, you're left with an incredibly tactical game. It levels the field, making it a game where the most seasoned veteran can take on the most casual gamer and still have good match.

15 PRINCE OF PERSIA THE SANDS OF TIME — 91

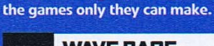
UBISOFT ■ NGC/90

Ubisoft show other developers how to update classic games without ruining them, as the brilliant 2D platformer gets transformed into an outstanding 3D platformer. Maybe there's too much fighting, and maybe the puzzles are too samey… but really, it all reeks of quality. Superb.

16 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/100

With Mario's papery ability to fold himself into a paper plane or turn sideways to become nigh-invisible, plus a great fighting mechanism and rippable scenery, this is a brilliant example of Nintendo doing what they do best – making the games only they can make.



17 WAVE RACE BLUE STORM — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

A few tiny frame rate problems hamper the PAL version of this aquatic racer, but it is still a fabulous game. It's convincingly speedy and it looks wonderful – the water effects will leave you staggered. The controls are intuitive and effective. In short, this is absolute magic.





18 VIEWTIFUL JOE — 90

CAPCOM ■ NGC/84

Some people love the unusual looks, some people hate them. Either way, get past the cel shading and this 2D-yet-3D beat-'em-up impresses. Elements like speeding up and slowing down time during battles only adds to the cinematic feel. It can be frustrating, but you'll love it anyway.

19 SECOND SIGHT — 90

CODEMASTERS ■ NGC/97

Excellent psychic stealth-'em-up. Who are you? Why are you here? All will be revealed – if you survive. The levels are tightly designed, offering scope for replay, while its distinctive style and original touches make it one of the most memorable games we've played in years.

20 METAL GEAR SOLID THE TWIN SNAKES — 90

KONAMI ■ NGC/91

This is a superb stealth action, with a more than healthy pedigree. A great story combined with revamped graphics to make this old PlayStation title blossom on Gamecube. The voice acting and music are superb. The only problems are the long, unskippable cutscenes, the short length and possibly too many bosses. We're just picky, though, this is a really, really good game that we'd definitely recommend.

21 BURNOUT 2 — 90

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

The best realistic racer on Gamecube. It looks great, it's wonderfully fast, and then there are the crashes… When you've had fun roaring round the streets, Crash mode gives you the opportunity to beat up your car in the most spectacular manner possible. Accessible and entertaining.

22 WARIO WARE INC. MEGA PARTY GAME$ — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/97

A quickfire succession of hilarious five-second minigames are blasted at you and up to three friends. With tasks like nose picking, cat poking and banana peeling, it's wholeheartedly original, outlandishly quirky and very good fun. Thoroughly recommended.

23 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE 1 & 2 — 90

ATARI ■ NGC/78

This online RPG will devour huge chunks of your life. Get ready for lots of menu screens, numbers and bashing crates. Note: 1) you'll need a broadband adaptor to play online – good luck finding one of *those*. 2) Third-party memory cards are prone to corrupt with this. Don't risk 'em.

24 1080° AVALANCHE — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

More of a racer than a trick-based snowboarder, although jumps, spins and flips are all there. Short courses and a fair bit of pace keep things feeling tight. The time trialling modes are the best bits – Gate Trial will have you trying to shave seconds off your time for months.

TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
A tour-de-force of everything good gaming should be.

PRINCE OF PERSIA
An innovative time-rewinding twist and excellent puzzles make this essential.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Yes, it's a little easy, but you'll enjoy every second.

RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC
Can't touch *Sunshine*, but it's entertaining and looks 'the bomb'.

WARIO WORLD
Not that tough to beat, admittedly, but still bags of fun.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
Single-player mode looks as cute as ever, but it's rock hard.

F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun. Really rockets along.

WAVE RACE BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching crashes.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

25 NBA STREET V3 — 90

Think *Space Jam* meets *NBA Jam* meets EA's *NBA Street* and you're pretty much there. The basic premise is that you have to take on the Nintendo Allstars (ever thought how good Mario would be at basketball, can jump ten storeys and is as small and nippy as a monkey from *Timesplitters 2*…?) Entertaining arcade basketball meets Nintendo.

26 ANIMAL CROSSING — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/98

Ever fancied leaving home and living in a town populated by animals? The full teenage Dr Moreau experience can be yours, complete with N64 graphics and strange noises. Somehow it's horribly addictive, as you improve your house, fill the museum and get a life.

27 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS — 90

ATARI ■ NGC/81

Vast boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll devour vast chunks of your life," our RPG fanatic assures us. The spaces in between the meat of your quest (for some missing moonstones) are stuffed with the usual RPG battling, puzzle solving and shopping. Looks dated now.

28 CONFLICT DESERT STORM 2 — 90

SCI ■ NGC/86

Even better than the last *CDS*, but again very brown and set during the first Gulf war. There's a new aspect to this one: you're not allowed to let any of your men die, which leads to all sorts of life-saving heroics and more opportunity for you to 'get to know' your squad member

29 WORMS 3D — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/87

You know the score. You have four worms. Your worms must kill other worms. The special weapons are as crazy as ever (Sheep, the Holy Hand Grenade). The only real difference is that it's now in 3D, which will affect your strategies for the better.

30 ETERNAL DARKNESS — 89



NINTENDO ■ NGC/74

A Lovecraftian horror that sees you playing as a dozen different characters to fight off a dark, shambling evil. As you see more, your sanity meter falls and when that drops to the bottom… This is a survival horror that spans twenty centuries of history. It's not another *Resi* clone, there's more to it than that. There are a few weaknesses in the combat, but other than that it's nearly perfect.

31 LEGEND OF ZELDA FOUR SWORDS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/102

This is an obscure *Zelda* game that's pretty hard on the pockets – in multiplayer mode, each of the four players needs a GBA and link cable. Nonetheless, it's great fun, very amusing and would've scored more highly if the best bit of the Japanese version, Tetra's Trackers was included.

32 RESIDENT EVIL 89
CAPCOM ■ NGC/72
Compelling survival horror. Play as Jill if you want to take things gently, Chris if you're feeling hardcore. Then immerse yourself in this puzzle-solving, zombie-battling frightfest. There's a bit of backtracking and the puzzles are annoying, but they don't hamper it too much.

33 SPLINTER CELL 89
UBI SOFT ■ NGC/81
Only Sam Fisher and his various high-tech gadgets like sticky bombs and camera disruptors stand between terrorists and the Free World. It's usual stealth 'em up stuff, but done with a fair degree of flair and polish.

34 SSX 3 89
EA ■ NGC/87
Snowboard around one giant mountain, entering races or showing off tricks. Complete all three peaks and you'll get the chance to spend 15-30 minutes tricking your way down the whole mountain. The frame rate can be glitchy, and it's not quite as free-roaming as it seems at first, but it's a superb game.

35 DONKEY KONGA 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/99
Drum along to a soundtrack, following the symbols on screen for left bongo, right bongo, both bongos or clap. It's the sort of game that almost anyone can pick up and play. It's also completely addictive and tremendous fun. Despite the extra bongos costing £20 a set, the multiplayer's worth the expense.

36 PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN 88
UBISOFT ■ NGC/102
The Prince is older and his game's got more 'mature' (so, scantily-clad ladies and smart-arsed comments have been dropped in). It's still great to look at and great to play, with trickier puzzles than the first game, and although the fighting's a bit dodgy, the rest of it more than outweighs that problem.

37 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 88
EA ■ NGC/98
This is a big game. There are probably lost tribes in there if you play for long enough – but you won't see them if you have other interests, like a job or social life. More ball control, famous opponents, the ability to create your own golfer, 14 courses (11 of them new)… You can't get bigger or better than this.

38 LUIGI'S MANSION 88
NINTENDO ■ NGC/67
The most annoying thing about Luigi's own adventure is that it's TOO SHORT. That apart, his escapades in his newly-acquired haunted house play like a combination of *Super Mario World* and Ghostbusters. The man in the green hat has done himself proud with this one.

39 SUPER MONKEY BALL 88
ATARI ■ NGC/67
The first ingenious update of old classic *Marble Madness*, with encapsulated monkeys rolling around bizarre landscapes collecting bananas. Minigames include obvious ballgames like pool and golf, oddities like a tilting boxing ring and even a monkey version of *Mario Kart*.

40 NBA STREET V2 88
EA ■ NGC/84
You don't need a serious basketball sim – this one is stacks of fun, and unless those real-life stats are really vital to your enjoyment of a game, *NBA Street's* got everything you need. Three-on-three action, stunt combos and special moves, all crammed into a fast-moving game.

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES

SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from fight kings Namco.

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types pounding each other's faces in.

VIEWTIFUL JOE
The only one-player beat-'em-up in our top five. Stunning.

DEF JAM VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

MK DEADLY ALLIANCE
"Mind if I remove your spleen?" "Ooh, go on – finish me."

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

TIME-SPLITTERS 2
Classy first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks great and lacks the ropy on-foot sections of the sequel.

XIII
Euro-shooter with comic-book looks and very serious violence.

IKARUGA
A pure arcade shooter that's tougher than most.

41 DONKEY KONG: JUNGLE BEAT 87
NINTENDO ■ NGC/103
Get out those bongos, it's time to change your gaming habits. Guide DK through the jungle to collect bananas by tapping the drums, and beat bosses by clapping your hands. It'll pull you in so much you'll need a Radox bath to soothe aching arm muscles. The only real slip up is lack of a multiplayer mode.

42 MADDEN NFL 2005 87
EA ■ NGC/99
The main change here is the hit stick, which lets you decide how much physical impact your tackles have. Apart from that and a few tweaks to defensive plays and franchise mode, it's pretty much business as usual, so you should know what to expect from this American football sim by now. If you're a fan of the previous games and feel that you need an update on the successful formula, then this is the game for you.

43 DEF JAM VENDETTA 87
MAJESCO ■ NGC/82
All your favourite rappers get together to give wrestling games a kick up the booty. Start as a mere rookie and fight your way through the likes of DMX, Redman and Ludacris, and play the part of your girlfriend as she catfights with other lissome lovelies. Need we mention the great hip-hop soundtrack?

44 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67
Absolutely stinks of PS2 – go on, smell it! – but it's such good fun that it doesn't really matter. You'll find masses of grinds and stunts, a range of locations… Come on, this is Tony Hawk. Before he got in with Bam Margera and started clowning around in cars. You know exactly what this is like…

45 LOST KINGDOMS 2 87
N ■ NGC/81
Lost Kingdoms 2 is a lovely looking card-based RPG – statophiles are going to love building their decks, collecting new cards to add to it and crunching numbers. It's nicely broken up into a series of small and easily digestible pieces.

46 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER 87
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/68
Without a doubt the best Star Wars game on Gamecube, both in the way it looks and the way it plays. Take part in the battle of Hoth and whizz your ship down the trench to destroy the Death Star. Note: the whole thing has since been included as a two-player co-op game in *Rogue Squadron III*.

47 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 86
UBISOFT ■ NGC/90
Wonderful-looking action adventure with you finding rare animals and tackling an alien invasion. The visuals are stunning and the speech and effects make the grade too. Even the minigames are fun. The world is huge and detailed, but the slightly easy difficulty means it won't last as long as you'd like.

48 FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLE 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/91
Multiplayer RPG for up to four players – but each one will need a GBA and link cable, making this expensive if you're to play it properly. The order in which you pick up spells can be a bit random and the players' shared air bubble can be claustrophobic, but all in all this is good looking and ambitious.

49 WARIO WORLD 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/83
Punching, pounding portly fun. That's fun with a capital F (and U and N)! The meths-swilling anti-Mario gets his very own game and it's every bit as mad as you'd expect. Gather garlic to boost your strength and embark on a (too short) escapade that combines platforming and fighting. Wah-hah-haaaa!

50 BURNOUT 86
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
This was an absolutely killer racer in its day that was improved on massively by its sequel. Despite the spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and smooth frame rate, we'd still recommend you buy *Burnout 2* because it's got all that and so much more. Not that you'd be unhappy with this, far from it!

51 BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG 86
SEGA ■ NGC/87
Bright and bouncy, you'll have the 'la-la-la' theme tune stuck in your head for days after playing this bizarre, very Japanese, platformer. Were it not for the annoyingly glitchy later levels and the poor camera, this would be a classic. Who'd have thought rolling an egg around could be so much fun?

52 PIKMIN 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/80
Only Shigsy could've come up with a real-time-strategy game set in a garden. Olimar's first visit to Earth was a resource-management revelation. You have 100 Pikmin to carry out your commands as you try to rebuild your ship before you run out of air. And it looked as wonderful as it played. Just too short.

53 XIII 86
UBISOFT ■ NGC/88
Unusual graphics – cel shaded characters and scenes, plus comic-style effects (sequences of images, guns that literally go 'bam') set this FPS apart from the gun-toting crowd. Your sixth sense and a bit of stealth help to vary the pace as you set about solving the conspiracy and recovering your memory.

54 NFL 2K3 86
ATARI ■ NGC/79
Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the amount of work you have to put in to get your 11 bruisers playing together effectively. However, the enormous franchise mode and great sound and graphics make this a decent enough game of American football, if a tad out-of-date.

55 THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING 86
EA ■ NGC/87
Orc-slashing, goblin-gutting goodness featuring your favourite film fellowship. With more playable characters than *The Two Towers* (most notably, Gandalf is now in the mix), this takes you from Helm's Deep through to the defeat of Sauron at the Crack of Doom.

56 NBA LIVE 2004 86
EA ■ NGC/88
Under the polished EA Sports surface lies the expected impressively deep layer of substance. The licensed music and players are supported by a strong bedrock of stats and facts and character creation tools. Overall control has been improved and you've got more offensive options. It's soulless but slick.

DIRECTORY

Every Gamecube game ever… rated!

57 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO — 85

CAPCOM ■ NGC/78

Controlling two characters (Rebecca and Billy), you shoot your way through the usual hordes of zombies and monsters, solving puzzles to progress. Fab cutscenes and in-game visuals mean this looks a treat, and it's got bags of the old *Resi* atmosphere - a coppery, bloody, fear-filled atmosphere…

58 MARIO GOLF TOADSTOOL TOUR — 85

NINTENDO ■ NGC/95

For a *Mario* game, there's a surprising lack of Ninty-ness in many of the courses. It's just not as whacky as we'd like. And there's plenty of room for sensible in, say, *Tiger Woods*. That aside, it's easy to pick up the controls and the graphics are crisp and shiny. Plenty of modes and unlockables add longevity.

59 IKARUGA — 85

ATARI ■ NGC/80

Its toughness is the stuff of legend, even on the easy difficulty. Your little spaceship fires white and black projectiles, and you have to shoot the black and white nasties with their opposite colour. There are only five of the well-designed levels, but it will take you a while to see them all.

60 FIFA FOOTBALL 2004 — 85

EA ■ NGC/87

The best footie sim on Gamecube (unless you import *Winning Eleven* from Japan), with around 400 licensed, face-scanned players, licensed teams and stadia. The free kick system's been tweaked, and corner-taking's menu-driven. So, a single game or a whole career? It's all here.

61 EXTREME G3 — 85

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

An underrated gem, this. It's very fast, the tracks are huge, sprawling and well-designed and you'll find some very cunning uses for the inventive weapons you acquire. The only down side is that it's a bit soulless. The multiplayer's also nowhere near as good as it could (or should) have been.

62 SPIDER-MAN 2 — 84

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/96

How long have we been waiting for a game that actually makes us feel like a superhero? Well, it's here! Freely swinging through an enormous city, you'll actually feel the joy of doing whatever a spider can. It's not detailed and some of the quests and missions get samey, but still… that swinging!

63 JUDGE DREDD DREDD VS DEATH — 84

VIVENDI ■ NGC/89

Mega City One comes to life. Sadly, it's not an especially *long* life, but while it lasts you get to play as ol' chinny himself, solving crimes, nailing perps and eventually tracking down the Dark Judges. The setting and story are spot-on. Apart from the length, the fiddly controls are the other letdown.

64 POKÉMON COLOSSEUM — 84

NINTENDO ■ NGC/93

The *Pokémon* series gains an RPG! Your task is to save the Shadow Pokémon from Darkness and destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters! Aww. Really, though, it's an awful lot of fighting and you'll need a GBA *Pokémon* title to get the most out of the colosseum mode.

65 TALES OF SYMPHONIA — 84

NINTENDO ■ NGC/100

A traditional RPG, and good looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the specific locations you enter throughout the adventure are stunning. The only downer in the visual stakes is the relatively ugly overworld. The rubbish, clichéd dialogue will irritate, though.

66 RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC — 84

UBISOFT ■ NGC/78

Rayman manages to create a fun platformer, despite his inability to add anything new to the genre. It's bright, it's solid and it's got some enjoyable minigames. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right. When you've played all the Mario you can handle, give Ray a go.

67 ISS2 — 83

KONAMI ■ NGC/68

Once upon a time, this series was untouchable, but the *FIFA* games have ramped up their quality while the GC *ISS* seemed much slower than its predecessors and your players had huge turning circles. *ISS2* is a great game, but we expected so much more of it. However, it's MUCH better than *ISS3*.

68



ROGUE SQUADRON III REBEL STRIKE — 83

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/88

This is a third person *Star Wars* shooter, so you should know what to expect from this. It's not without its flaws and there is room for improvement. Star Wars is all about screaming TIE fighters and taking on Star Destroyers, not poncing around on foot. So whether you're playing Luke Skywalker's storyline or Wedge Antilles', the on-foot sections ruin the excitement of the rest. It looks and sounds great, and the two-player *Rogue Leader* rules.

69 SERIOUS SAM NEXT ENCOUNTER — 83

TAKE 2 ■ NGC/94

Don't be fooled by the name, this is very silly indeed. For a mere £20 you can spend hours gunning down wave after wave of brightly-coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. Okay, the killing can get a bit relentless, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's the man. This is a pure, out and out shooter. Never mind the depth, feel the speed!

70 BATEN KAITOS — 83

NAMCO ■ NGC/103

Role-playing adventure, with card-based battles. This game is unique and delivers a wonderful, magical and fantastical world; the stunning vistas, towns and interiors are awash with lavish colours. It is let down by stilted and painfully wooden voice acting.

71 FREEDOM FIGHTERS — 83

IO ■ NGC/86

Less serious than the Desert Storm series, this is an enjoyable squad-based third-person shooter. Many of the levels interact with each other, so objectives completed in one mission will affect the events in another. Forget the serious side, this is pure fun.

72 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 — 82

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/100

Tony Hawk rumbles on. This time the graphics have a more cartoony feel, and story mode features a lot of Bam Margera. Some bits don't belong in a skateboard game, like driving vehicles and walking. Those bits are rubbish. The rest is great, and includes chunks of the first three games – with timer!

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE /RPGS



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own Gamecube itself.

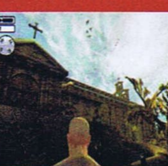
METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure. Again.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

LOST KINGDOMS II
Polished RPG with card collecting elements. Neat.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-'em-up from the *'Splitters 2* team.

MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
Beautifully updated version of Solid Snake's first outing.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Another Nintendo exclusive that never fails to entertain.

SPLINTER CELL
Captivating stealth-laced adventure from the hand of Tom Clancy.

73 SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 — 82

ATARI ■ NGC/78

If games teach you one thing, it's this: out of balls, monkeys want you dead. And they probably carry guns. Inside balls (WHERE A MONKEY BELONGS!), the little creatures are a delight. *SMB2* offers you a wide array of minigames and over 100 levels to roll your imprisoned simian around.

74 METAL ARMS GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM — 82

VIVENDI ■ NGC/88

Hard – like Ray Winstone in a steel top hat. This robot shoot-'em-up is tough right from the difficult training level. The enemies are extremely resilient and have superb AI, so you need to be accurate and quick. The camera can be awkward and landscape hazards (eg water is instantly fatal) can be unfairly harsh.

75 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III CARD REV. — 82

SEGA ■ NGC/94

A new idea for *PSO* – card-based battling. Following on from the events in *PSO 1&2*, you now have to choose a side (Arkz or Heroside) and do battle by rolling dice and selecting cards. You really need to be familiar with *PSO* to get the most out of it and you'll also require an elusive broadband adaptor…

76 THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT — 82

EA ■ NGC/89

Having spent their previous game imprisoned within the four walls of their home, this one sees your virtual people playthings freed from their luxury prison as you send them out to work. It's still rather ugly and it doesn't sound too great, but it will last you a very long time.

77 NFL STREET 2 — 81

EA ■ NGC/103

The American football game that tears up the rulebook and gives you a licence to run like hell. This sequel boasts a new ability that allows you to run around the walls *Prince of Persia*-style to gain height when running, catching or passing a scrum. A quality package for all American football fans.

78



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA OOT MASTER QUEST — 81

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

This game is an absolute bargain. Now that's true value for money as this game would be worth paying for in its own right, especially to the legions of Zelda fanatics out there. It still looks pretty much the same as the N64 version, although the Master Quest version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles. Forget the graphics - it's an old game - and immerse yourself in Rinkydink's earlier outing.

79 AGGRESSIVE INLINE — 81

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/72

This is a top-class roller blading sim. Having wheels that stay attached to your feet when they're off the floor means that you can pull off moves like swinging around lampposts. There's even a career mode. On the negative side, the soundtrack is quite frankly rubbish and the graphics are a little bland.

80 THE SIMS 81

EA ■ NGC/79

Life, Jim, but not as we know it. Your Sim has to do all the things a real person would – leave home, make friends, find a partner, eat, sleep and go to the lav. Yet it's all done in a bizarrely addictive way. Like *Animal Crossing*, there's no point to it, but that's life for you: meaningless, but you want to keep doing it.



81 F1 CAREER CHALLENGE 81

EA ■ NGC/83

Ever wanted to indulge in the life of an F1 driver? Now you can… minus the model girlfriends, huge salary and the celeb-packed parties. Get behind the wheel as a rookie driver and earn your super license. There are no three-point turns of emergency stops here, just a series of trials to prove you can handle the F1 disciplines. Then you can get on with the racing, which looks good, shifts well and handles nice.

82 NHL 2005 80

EA ■ NGC/99

Plays a slick, quick game of hockey, but if you dislike the sport, there simply won't be enough here to convince you that it's worthwhile, it's easy to learn and you can rack up huge scores.

83 BALDUR'S GATE DARK ALLIANCE 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/81

Endlessly battling goblins and their ilk can get tedious, but if you've ever played D&D you'll enjoy levelling up and spending your EXP. However, it's a lazy port from PS2, with slowdown and a jittery frame rate. Nonetheless, the game still looks a treat

84 MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE 80

MIDWAY ■ NGC/77

The fighting system's been vastly overhauled from earlier *MKs*, although it's far too easy to get an infinite by button mashing. The lack of ring outs and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got three fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of gore. Best with two players.

85 PAC-MAN VS 80

NAMCO ■ NGC/90

This tiny gem is free – but only when you buy another, inferior full-priced title (*R: Racing Evolution*). While *Pac-Man Vs* isn't a complex title, the four-player mechanic works well. Think of it as a trifle to have fun with between serious gaming sessions. You'll need a Game Boy and link cable to play it properly.

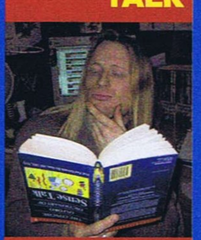


86 DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY 80

EA ■ NGC/99

More fighting style/ More stylin' fight/ If only they'd/ Got the frame rate right.
Yes, this is actually much better than *Def Jam Vendetta*, with a great fighting system and brilliant have-a-go crowds, but the jerkiness (graphical scratching…?) ruins it.

PAUL'S SENSE TALK



ADMIRING THE OPPOSITE SEX

Letching at ladies is easy. Though at it's best, it must always be surreptitious, and entirely peripheral. Fail to do this, and you look like a perv.

PLEASURABLE IMBIBEMENT

Why is it that drinking makes one generally see double and feel single?

JUST BE-CLAUSE

NEVER read the fine print. There ain't no way you're going to like it, and there's nothing you can do about it.

READER SENSE

Money can't buy happiness -- but somehow it's more comfortable to cry in a Porsche than in a Hyundai.

Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly it sank, proving once again that: You can't have your kayak and heat it.
Carina Miles
Carrier Pigeon

(There's definitely sense there, albeit in limited quantity, but as far as that last one is concerned... if we ever meet, i'm gonna have to have stern words) - PE

Do you have more 'sense' than our Sense-spewing Art monkey?
More than likely! So go on, send 'em in . The best get printed, and if you're really lucky, he may send you a hair from his dog's underbelly.

Send them to him at **paul.edwards@futurenet.co.uk** or to Sense Talk at the usual address.

87 THE SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/87

After a succession of gaming stinkers, the Simpsons take a tip from the *Grand Theft Auto* series and set about stealing cars, taking on missions and doling out a bit of cartoon-style violence. Not original, but loads of fun.

88 MARIO PARTY 5 80

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

Ain't no party like a Mario Party. Except all the other parties in the series. This console-based boardgame is one of the best yet, but is still really only good as a multiplayer game. The boardgame bits are a little slow and dull, but the minigames – popping other players' inner tubes, mech fights – are hilarious.

89 DIE HARD VENDETTA 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/74

WARNING: Do not play this in earshot of old people. We're sure The Vest never swore quite like this. However, he did enjoy a fair bit of gunplay, excellent set-pieces and cheesy dialogue. This has plenty of all three, all hampered by cumbersome controls and frustrating sections. Yippee-kay-ay, melon farmer.

90 POOL PARADISE 80

IGNITION ■ NGC/92

Not just UK pool – poke your cue at eight-ball, nine-ball and stunt tables too, if that's what fills your triangle. Using the analogue stick to power your cue is a nice touch, and darts and *Dropzone* feature as minigames. Earth shattering? No. But it's all solid and playable, as you'd expect.

91 PUYO POP FEVER 80

SEGA ■ NGC/91

Puyo Pop: if you've never heard of it, you must have started gaming all of a week ago. It's quite simple: match coloured blobs that drop from the top of the screen and – hey presto! – they disappear. How radical is that? Two-player's a whole lot more fun than you'd think, too.

92 NFL STREET 79

EA ■ NGC/90

American football isn't quite brought to the masses by *NFL Street*. Even though the strategy's dumbed down it's still very stoppy-starty and so can be slightly drawn-out. We'd also have liked a custom play editor or a whacky training mode to help players get to grips with the basic plays.

93 HARRY POTTER & THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN 79

EA ■ NGC/95

A *Potter* title that actually works pretty well as a game! Whatever next? The way you use the differing skills of Harry, Ron and Hermione to solve problems adds interest to a (we're being kind here) rather thin storyline. The controls are a bit iffy, but the atmosphere's spot-on. Not just for Potter fans.

94 BEACH SPIKERS 79

ATARI ■ NGC/72

Not to everyone's taste – although developers AM2 have at least abandoned the jigglies and concentrated on making a proper sports sim. You'll need lightning-quick reactions and good team control to succeed. Its single-player appeal is limited, so you'll need to play with friends to get the most from it.

95 CAPCOM VS SNK 2 EO 79

CAPCOM ■ NGC/72

Enormous depth and an avalanche of play modes give the game longevity – versus mode will last you for ages – but it doesn't work well with the GC's joypad (specials on the C-stick? Cheapness abounds!) and so you'll really need to shell out for an arcade stick. It's pretty ugly too.

96 DAKAR 2 79

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

Two problems with this: it's basically one big time trial (and you can find a time trial mode in any racing game) and there aren't any real opponents. The handling of your vehicle and the varied courses between Paris and Dakar make up for it. A fun drive, just not a very competitive one.

97 NBA COURTSIDE 2002 79

NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

There's a wealth of basketball games available for your Gamecube and this is far from the worst, with all the passing, dunking and other ball-based moves you could ask for. However, it's not the best or most recent either. *NBA Street V2* or *NBA Live 2004* would be our preferred choices.

98 NHL HITZ 20-02 79

MIDWAY ■ NGC/67

Ice hockey's probably the most Brit-friendly of North American sports – no slowing down, fewer strange-seeming terms to get used to – and this is a fast, slick game. *NHL 2005* is more recent and slightly better, but if you can't get that, *NHL Hitz 20-02* is going to be your next best ice hockey option.

99 KNOCKOUT KINGS 2003 79

EA ■ NGC/75

A decent boxer. Slightly better than – and very different – from *Rocky*. The camera's really dynamic, and the control system can feel disorientating at first. There are plenty of modes and you can build your own boxer to punch his way through career mode. Looks rather nice, too.

100 SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW 78

UBISOFT ■ NGC/97

Sam Fisher returns for more spying, sniping and skulking around in the dark – but his first adventure was far superior. The quality of the conversion's not great and some serious gameplay flaws from the Xbox original haven't been addressed, but we kept coming back. Until the glitchy last level, anyway.




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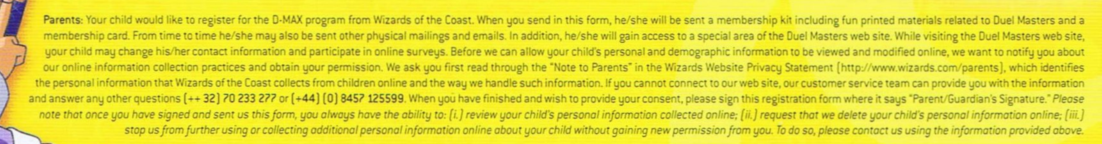
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